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**Sexual Personae in Horace's Erotic Poetry**

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**Sexual Personae in Horace's Erotic Poetry**

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# **Sexual Personae in Horace's Erotic Poetry**

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2012

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The application of persona theory to the poetry of Horace is a well-established method of critical analysis, but in Horace's love poems we can also distinguish various erotic voices. The *Odes* and *Epodes* of Horace feature several distinct sexual personae as the speakers of the poems. Horace the Lothario is a witty, didactic, slightly detached expert on love and erotic behavior. Horace the Excluded Lover is a gloomy failure at love who desires someone he cannot have. Horace the Ephebophile seeks as the object of his erotic desire a young man generally older than traditional Roman pederasty would suggest, but this desire is coded and suppressed. Horace the Moralizer, possibly in ironic relation to the other three, attacks loose sexual morals and praises Augustus for returning chastity and monogamy to Rome. Finally, the sexual personae of some of Horace's poems defy simple categorization and must be analyzed more closely in order to explain the nature of the speaker. This methodology, the division into sexual personae, allows us to give a fresh critical appraisal to Horace's erotic poetry.

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## Introduction

In his *Vita Horati*, Suetonius notes a sexual peccadillo attributed in antiquity to the Roman poet Horace:

*Ad res Venerias intemperantior traditur; nam speculato cubiculo scorta dicitur habuisse disposita, ut quocumque respexisset ibi ei imago coitus referretur.*

It is handed down that he was rather licentious in matters of love, for it is said that he had prostitutes placed here and there in a mirrored bedroom, so that wherever he looked, the appearance of sex would be reflected to him there.

While the veracity of this anecdote can be doubted (even Suetonius, with *traditur* and *dicitur*, seems to be distancing himself from it), it nonetheless provides us with a valuable image. As Horace looked into each mirror, he would see a reflection of himself, but from a slightly different perspective and with a slightly different rendering of himself. The sexual actor in each mirror image was always “Horace,” but no two images were exactly the same.

As with his physical body, so with his poetic corpus. Horace’s poetry is characterized by a variety of nuanced self-depictions that make it difficult, if not impossible, to obtain more than a general sense of the personality and demeanor of the poet. In fact, this apparent disconnect between the “real live” Horace and the self (or selves) he presents in his poetry causes one to question what details from his poetry can be used to determine details about his life, or, alternatively, what elements of Horace’s life can help us analyze and understand his works; such an observation lends itself to a New Critical approach to the poetry of Horace. Steele Commager’s 1967 book *The Odes of Horace: A Critical Study* lays out the dilemma:

Horace's specifically autobiographical love poems present a special problem of language. His professions are consistently couched in terms so exaggerated, and so conventional, as to travesty the emotions they record. At the very moment that he proclaims the intensity of his emotions he simultaneously begs us not to believe him.<sup>1</sup>

We must abandon the attempt to search for a "real" Horace in his *Odes*, instead being aware that the self-presentation is a literary conceit; "to expect a direct relation between a writer's life and his work is to misconceive the function of literature, and with Horace the identification is especially misleading."<sup>2</sup> The Horace we find in his poetry cannot be analyzed like a person, because in fact there is no single Horace in the poetry: "even in the Odes that pretend to be his most private statements, the real quality of his feelings eludes any definition."<sup>3</sup> Rather, it is better to understand the speaker of Horace's poetry as being one of several Horatian personae.

This approach to the works of Horace traces its roots back to Alvin Kernan's 1959 book *The Cankered Muse*, in which he describes a new "comprehensive method" of analyzing the satire of the English Renaissance period.<sup>4</sup> In order to make the satires more "comprehensible," Kernan uses the "terms of drama" to create a framework for understanding them: "the picture of society drawn by the satirist becomes the 'scene,' and the voice we 'hear' becomes the satiric 'hero.'"<sup>5</sup> While Kernan was aware that the English satirists took their models from ancient Rome, such as Horace and Juvenal, it was not until William S. Anderson's work over the next decades that the concept of a poetic

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<sup>1</sup> Commager 1967, 44.

<sup>2</sup> Commager 1967, 157.

<sup>3</sup> Commager 1967, 159.

<sup>4</sup> Kernan 1959, 6.

<sup>5</sup> Kernan 1959, 6.

persona at work in Roman satire was fully explored. His critical doctrine that “separates poet from personal speaker in the poem” makes it clear that Horace was a supremely sophisticated poet who carefully crafted a “Horace” within the conventions of the genre.<sup>6</sup>

The persona theory method has since been applied to a variety of works, authors, and (most importantly to this paper) genres in Latin literature, including to Horace as well. Most recently, Ellen Oliensis’ 1998 book *Horace and the Rhetoric of Authority* explored the possibility that in each of his 4 major generic works (*Satires*, *Epodes*, *Odes*, and *Epistles*), Horace was crafting a particular persona of power on a social hierarchy. She writes: “I read Horace’s poems...as complex gestures performed before and for a variety of audiences. I single out authority and deference as the characteristic and complementary strategies of what we might call (following Erving Goffman) Horace’s ‘face-work.’”<sup>7</sup> The astute reader of Horace must be aware of a variety of poetic “selves” which emerge throughout his works.

This paper seeks to argue for the appearance of various sexual personae in the *Odes* and *Epodes* of Horace. These two compilations, significantly more so than the *Epistles* or *Satires*,<sup>8</sup> feature several poems with erotic themes and subjects, wherein different characters and love-objects are described and addressed. The *Odes* in particular contain a diverse array of tones, moods, and situations, which can serve to cloud one’s understanding of who Horace “is” (if that is what one hopes to find in reading his poetry). Working from a framework of distinct sexual personae in the *Odes* and *Epodes*, the

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<sup>6</sup> Anderson 1982, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Oliensis 1998, 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Satires* 1.2 being an obvious exception; it will be referred to below.

reader is better able to organize and make sense out of the multiple disparate sexualities present in the poems. These personae are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but they guide the tone and spirit of their respective poems; the poetic “voice” of any erotic poem generally conforms to the expected attributes of one of several sexual personae.

Beyond the distinguishable characteristics of each persona, multiple voices are set off by references in the poems to the act of creating poetry. These references are made by the speaker of the poem himself, identifying himself as a poet (especially as a singer of lyric odes, much like those of the compilation itself). By mentioning poetry in this way, the speaker gives a metaliterary quality to the poem; Horace reflexively talks about writing poetry in the poetic voice of the ode or epode. As a result of drawing attention to the poems as works of art, the poetic illusion that the reader reads Horace’s actual words and thoughts is continually punctured, and the presence of a poetic persona is thus reaffirmed. It is as if each sexual persona is admitting, “Horace wrote me; I exist within a fictive work Horace wrote.”

Horace was not a playwright, and in the *Ars Poetica* (304-306) he admits that he was not able to write any plays, but that does not mean he was unable to write dialogue for characters. In fact, several poems in the *Odes* and *Epodes* have such theatrical modes of composition. These poems derive from earlier models, such as the bucolic shepherd-mime poetry of Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus; the *mimiamboi* of Herodas; and even Vergil’s *Eclogues*. Many of these earlier poems are written as dialogues between two distinct characters or monologues delivered by a character with a unique personality. Horace probably had some familiarity with these earlier Greek and Roman works, and



their dramatic quality may have influenced his own poetry. For example, in *Epode* 2, the speaker talks at length about the charms of the country life before being revealed at the end to be a “city slicker.” In *Epode* 5, Horace has written lines for both a young boy and a witch. And *Odes* 3.9 is comprised totally of dialogue, like a dramatic work; a man and woman are arguing about their relationship and eventually reconcile with each other. Clearly, Horace had the inclination to write for literary characters in the *Odes* and *Epodes*. It is not much of a leap to suggest that he could also conceive of characters who were extensions (or distortions) of himself.

Horace’s polyvalent sexual personae in the *Odes* and *Epodes* will be the subject of this paper. In Chapter 1, I will examine the typical attributes and characteristics of the Lothario, the first (and most fundamental) sexual persona of Horace. In Chapters 2 through 4 I will examine the Excluded Lover, the Ephebophile, and the Moralizer. Chapter 5 will be dedicated to analyzing the poems of Horace whose speaker does not fit a clear sexual persona and in which there is a degree of ambiguity. Horace’s strategic sexualities constitute a valuable object of study if one wishes to understand fully the meaning and sense of the *Odes* and *Epodes*, two works of the highest caliber in Latin literature.

## Chapter One: The Lothario Persona

The first sexual persona in the works of Horace to be evaluated is “Horace the Lothario,” which possesses certain defining features. First, the Lothario assumes a didactic position toward the addressee of the poem, giving (perhaps unsolicited?) advice and sometimes speaking in gnomic statements. In addition, the Lothario claims, explicitly or implicitly, to be an expert on women and the game of love. Tibullus 1.4 gives an earlier (though nearly contemporary) example of this kind of persona, in which the speaker identifies himself as a *magister* (75) and proclaims: *me, qui spernentur, amantes / consultant; cunctis ianua nostra patet* (77-78). Seeking advice on matters of love, the speaker had in the past consulted Priapus, whose lessons gave him an authority on erotic lore (though this authority is humorously undercut by the last four lines, in which he admits that the training is useless for wooing Marathus, the latest object of his desire). It is this kind of man, a master of the *Veneris praecepta* (79), which the Horatian Lothario purports to be.<sup>9</sup> He also employs a humorous tone in these poems, often using a slightly self-effacing demeanor to achieve this. The Lothario is one of the most common sexual personae in the Horatian corpus, so several examples can be found of its application in the *Odes* and *Epodes*.

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<sup>9</sup> Propertius 1.1 offers a similar yet contrary version. Here the speaker speaks from a position of authority gained through *negative* experience, not romantic conquest. He warns the reader to maintain monogamous relationships (35-36) and threatens pain (the same kind he has experienced) for those who do not heed him (37-38).

A clear example is *Odes* 1.33, in which Horace advises a man named Albius (identified with that same Tibullus<sup>10</sup>) to quit writing weepy elegies about his lost love and gives him a lesson about relationships; this advice contrasts sharply with Tibullus 1.4, in which Venus “shows favor to humble complaints and wretched tears” (*illa querellis / supplicibus miseris fletibus illa favet*, 71-72). Horace takes a didactic role at the very first line of this poem, counseling Albius (with a mild negative hortatory subjunctive, *ne doleas*, instead of a harsher imperative) not to grieve when his girlfriend is unfaithful to him, *laesa fide* (4) and has found a superior younger rival, *tibi iunior / praeniteat* (3-4). Horace’s word choice in the exhortation, *doleas*, is a loaded term; it connotes the grieving common in elegy which the Lothario thinks has gone too far. In the first two books of the Tibullan corpus (*i.e.*, the two books in which his authorship is certain), in fact, the words *doleo* and *dolor* appear 7 times in 1238 lines, a rate of once every 177 lines; Tibullus’ fellow (and roughly contemporary) elegist Propertius uses them another 43 times of his own in his 4014 lines, a rate of once every 93 lines.<sup>11</sup> (By comparison, Horace uses such words only 4 times, once being in this poem, in 3659 lines of *Odes* and *Epodes*, a rate of once every 915 lines.)<sup>12</sup>

In the next stanza, the Lothario goes on to explain to Albius that such romantic triangles are common to the human race: no one ever seems to be in love with the same person who is in love with him/her. There is an implicit lesson here for Albius: if Cyrus has unrequited love for Pholoe, and Lycoris has unrequited love for Cyrus, Horace seems

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<sup>10</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 368: “There can be no reasonable doubt that this ode is addressed to the elegiac poet Albius Tibullus.”

<sup>11</sup> Govaerts 1966; Purnelle 1997.

<sup>12</sup> Cooper 1916.

to be telling Albius that someone whom he doesn't notice or respond to may have unrequited love for him. Indeed, the elegists' obsession with a single love object (such as Delia in Tibullus' own works) is incompatible with the liberated Epicurean approach to relationships which the Lothario normally espouses. This contrast places Horace against Tibullus not only in terms of approaches to love but also, metatextually, in terms of poetic genre (lyric versus elegy), which invites the reader to remember that, as Horace is a real-life poet, the Lothario "Horace" of *Odes* 1.33 is a poetic persona.

Horace goes on to teach Albius about how love works by purporting to explain to Albius (and the reader of the poem) the will of Venus, saying *sic visum Veneri* (10). He goes on to describe what he says pleases Venus: sending "unequal forms and spirits" (*impares formas atque animos*) under the bronze yoke of love, in a cruel joke (11-12). The bronze yoke (*sub iuga aenea*) recalls Tibullus 1.4.16, *paulatim sub iuga colla dabit*, advice given by Priapus to Tibullus on how to catch a handsome young man. The "yoke" metaphor for love is also seen in earlier Greek examples, such as Theocritus 30<sup>13</sup> and Theognis 1357-60;<sup>14</sup> interestingly, all three of these earlier texts refer to pederastic relationships, whereas Horace uses the metaphor in a heterosexual context in this poem. The *impares formas atque animos* that the Lothario refers to can mean many things: unequal classes, unequal temperaments, unequal physical attractiveness, unequal passion for each other, and especially unequal age (and the Lothario often uses his age and experience as proof of his authority in matters of love). As a description of social status,

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<sup>13</sup> καὶ νῦν, εἴτ' ἐθέλω, χρή με μακρὸν σχόντα τὸν ἄμφενα / ἔλκειν τὸν ζυγόν, εἴτ' οὐκ ἐθέλω (28-9).

<sup>14</sup> Αἰεὶ παιδοφίλησιν ἐπὶ ζυγὸν ἀνχένη κεῖται / δῶσμορον, ἀργαλέον μνήμα φιλοξενίης (1357-8).

though, it bears heavily on the message of the end of the poem, for it will reveal the Lothario's romantic preferences.

Horace offers himself up to Albius in the last stanza as an example of a victim of a romantic triangle, and with *ipsum me* at the beginning of line 13 the reader may expect him to say something like "I myself once had unrequited love for a girl." Horace humorously toys with that expectation, however, and instead claims that once in the past, two women loved him at the same time and he had to choose one. The final *saevum iocum* is Horace's, in the last stanza: he tries to cheer up Albius, sad because he has lost his girl, by telling him a story about the time Horace could have had *two* girls—the Lothario is clueless as an agent of consolation. Although a *melior Venus* (13) sought him, a passionate freedwoman *libertina* (15) detained him in a *grata compede* (14)—a more pleasant form, perhaps, of the bronze yoke of Venus. The ambiguity of *melior* matches the multiple meanings for *impares*.<sup>15</sup> Horace could mean "more compatible," in which case the Lothario uses the example of himself to show how love is often random and unexplainable by human rationality; the fetter and the yoke imagery, like cattle or like soldiers going "under the yoke," suggest the unavoidable submission to the whims of fate and to the incomprehensible decisions of the heart.

But more fruitfully, *melior* can refer to better social standing, in which case the Lothario's preference for freedwomen is shown. Horace's social status, as David

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<sup>15</sup> Orellius (1886, 185) and Kiessling and Heinze (1955, 141) state that *melior* must mean that the woman is of better social standing than Myrtale. Plessis et al. (1924, 91) consider the possibility that Horace refers to a more compatible relationship but favor the interpretation that *melior* refers to a woman of a better social class than Myrtale because it fits with a sentiment described at *Odes* 1.27.14ff. Nisbet and Hubbard (1970, 374) interpret the line that "Horace pretends that the high-class courtesans of elegy pursued him too," a reading perhaps not fully supported by the text.

Armstrong convincingly lays out,<sup>16</sup> is in a murky position, as he is the son of a freedman but also a Roman knight of considerable wealth and connections. In this poem, Horace finds his favorite love objects among the freedwomen of Rome (in whose company he would have had some familiarity and ease), shunning the advances of a higher-class woman.<sup>17</sup> As Horace declares in *Satires* 1.2, he prefers to have relationships “in the second class—I speak of the freedwomen” (*in classe secunda, / libertinarum dico*, 47-48). Sleeping with a good Roman *matrona* will lead to trouble for Horace and have him branded an adulterer, but sleeping with a freedwoman is safer. Moreover, a relationship with a respectable woman would undoubtedly lead to marriage, which is exactly the kind of monogamy that the Lothario advises Albius not to pursue at the beginning of *Odes* 1.33; better to have a variety of short-term flings, even if it means scorning a potential lover from a better (*melior*) social class. Indeed, in *Epodes* 14 tells Maecenas, “I who am not content with a single lover pine for the freedwoman Phryne” (*me libertina nec uno / contenta Phryne macerat*, 15-16). As we have seen, Horace in this poem uses a humorous, slightly self-effacing tone, takes a didactic role, and claims expertise with women, all while hinting that he is in fact a persona being used in a poem.

Another poem with a Lothario persona is *Odes* 4.11, in which Horace invites an older woman to a party. The object of Horace’s affection is Phyllis, whose name

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<sup>16</sup> Armstrong 1986.

<sup>17</sup> Again there is ambiguity whether *melior* means “of better social standing than Myrtale” or “of better social standing than Horace.” It is possible that Horace refers to a woman of a senatorial family, who thus would have been above him in status. However, because of the emphasis on Venus pairing up *impares*, it would be more in the spirit of the poem if Horace shunned a woman *equal* in status to him in favor of a *libertina*, rather than to deflect someone above him for someone below him.

“suggests the greenery with which she will crown her head, and fresh youth.”<sup>18</sup> However, Horace says he will never love another *femina* (34), so if we take this to be connected to Phyllis, she is possibly not a young woman (such as the *puella* of line 22 who has seized Telephus). Thus perhaps we can link her to the jar of wine *nonum superantis annum* (1) and the *adfluentes*<sup>19</sup> *annos* (19-20) of Maecenas, whose birthday is being celebrated in the party of this poem; we also note a theme of “things get better with age,” all the more appropriate in this 4<sup>th</sup> book of the *Odes*, written a decade after the first three (by a now-older Horace).<sup>20</sup> The affection behind the Lothario’s invitation is signaled by its sexual undertone: Horace has invited her to do joyous things (*advoceris / gaudiis*, 13-14) in the *ensem Veneris* (15), and since spring is the time for reproduction and flourishing, one may wonder with what activities Horace will choose to celebrate Maecenas’ birthday.

As in the previous poem, a love triangle has brought sadness to the addressee. Phyllis has her eye on Telephus (21), but not only is he above her socially (*non tuae sortis iuvenem*, 22), he has also been claimed by a *puella* who is *dives* and *lasciva* (23), and since Telephus has not heeded the Horatian recommendation to aim for women of a lower social class (as in 1.33), Phyllis cannot compete. Horace toys with our expectations for a love triangle: here two women compete for one man, not the reverse (as one often finds in Roman comedy). In lines 29-31 the Lothario again assumes his didactic role, teaching Phyllis to aim for what (or who) is attainable and avoid what (or who) is more than permitted. As in the previous poem, Horace advises against seeking a relationship

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<sup>18</sup> Garrison 1991, 360.

<sup>19</sup> Garrison 1991, 361; Garrison says *ad-* implies improvement rather than loss.

<sup>20</sup> The generally accepted dates for publication are 23 BC for Books I-III of the *Odes*, when Horace was 41, and 13 BC for Book IV, when Horace was 51.

with someone of higher social status (*disparem*, 31), only now he is speaking to a woman and not a man. Garrison<sup>21</sup> calls these “poker-faced” lines “lightly ironical in tone” and compares them with Callimachus, *A.P.* 7.89.12.<sup>22</sup> The Lothario directs Phyllis to learn a song with him to sing (*condisce modos*, 34), and with Telephus out of the picture, all Phyllis has left for love is Horace. This love seems to be requited, as Horace is pleased to hear her *amanda / voce* (34-35) as he instructs her, again in a didactic role, in the song.

Ellen Oliensis<sup>23</sup> sees the whole party of the poem as a mock re-staging of the Saecular Games, with the Lothario lampooning the Augustan moral mouthpiece of Horace’s saecular hymn: Maecenas’ birthday replaces the civic *saeculum*, the “modest blood sacrifice” at line 7 (out of place at a Horatian drinking party) replaces the huge Augustan ritual, the mixed-gender (*mixtae pueris puellae*, 10) slave crew replaces the double chorus that performed the *Carmen Saeculare*, and the Lothario’s teaching session with Phyllis in the last stanza reflects Horace’s role as the leader of the chorus who performed his own saecular hymn. Such a structure would give the poem a strikingly silly tone, with Horace poking fun at himself (in a not uncharacteristic way). The public moralist’s participation in a civic ceremony becomes reduced to a lover’s enticement with a private party.

As often, Horace alerts us to the persona at work in this poem by both highlighting the importance of poetry and by referring to Phyllis in terms of her presence in his poetry. The Lothario uses poetry to woo Phyllis (she is the addressee, and the poem

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<sup>21</sup> Garrison 1991, 362.

<sup>22</sup> Ἡνίδε, κείνοί σοι πᾶν ἐρέουσιν ἔπος.

<sup>23</sup> Oliensis 2007, 233.



itself is an invitation to an amorous environment), but he also claims that poetry is a way to diminish sorrows (*minuentur curae*, 35-36). Teaching Phyllis a song will also possibly allow the two of them to have a private moment together, spurring a romantic episode. Notably, Horace never tells us whose *modos* (34) they will sing; as the song during the Saecular Games was one of Horace's own, so perhaps the song in this scene is a lyric poem written by the Lothario himself. In addition, Horace refers to Phyllis as *meorum / finis amorum* (31-32), and since Phyllis is the last woman Horace will address in an erotic way in poetry (Book IV of the *Odes* being his last work), this phrase suggests both the Lothario's last sexual conquest and the poet's last female addressee. These references call attention to the reader that he/she is reading a poem, written by a poet, and thus that the figure of Horace in the poem is a literary construction. To summarize, in *Odes* 4.11 Horace acts as a *magister Veneris* toward Phyllis, claiming expertise in love and teaching her how to behave, while also using a humorous (and perhaps elaborately mock-solemn) tone with a self-effacing streak; this persona calls attention to the existence of the poem itself and his fictive status therein.

We can find evidence of the Lothario persona of Horace at work also in *Odes* 2.4, an address to a Phocian man named Xanthias who has fallen in love with an *ancilla* named Phyllis. The Lothario advises Xanthias not to feel bad and compares him to Homeric heroes who were also stirred with love (*movit*, used in both line 4 and 5) for slave-girls. This mock-heroic gesture gently kids the young man: he has no martial exploits to speak of, and he has been conquered not by a great warrior, but by an *ancilla*. Horace moves from Homeric epic to New Comedy and suggests that for all Xanthias

knows, Phyllis is actually a child of rich and famous parents (13-14). Such an unlikely turn of events matches a standard plot in Roman Comedy,<sup>24</sup> where a young man falls in love with a courtesan whose free birth, discovered by surprise at the end of the play, allows the two of them to pursue a dignified Roman marriage. The *certe* in line 15 exposes the irony of this sentiment: she *must* be born of royalty. With this sense of irony in mind, the Lothario's claim that the Phyllis is *fidelem* and *lucro aversam* (18-19) becomes suspicious: Horace is straining to make her seem like an unrealistic comedic heroine (with the same success as his comparison of the foppish Xanthias to Achilles and Ajax in the earlier lines), while at the same time perhaps signaling to us that the opposite is true and the girl really is part of the *scelesta plebe*. In these stanzas, Horace both shows off his sense of humor and his familiarity with literary tropes; by comparing Xanthias and Phyllis to characters in literature, he implicitly invites the idea that he too is a literary character, a persona within this poem.

This irony continues into the final stanza and informs the tone of what the Lothario is actually saying to Xanthias. Horace praises the arms, face, and calves (21) of Phyllis, dissecting her into various body parts. He however remains *integer*, whole and undissected—the Subject looking over the divided Object as if it were a dismembered animal under a microscope. The word calls to mind *Odes* 1.22, whose opening line is *Integer vitae scelerisque purus*, which suggests that Horace here claims he is morally unblemished, a disinterested appraiser of Phyllis' beauty. Yet the expanding tricolon of Phyllis' features seems like too many details for one who is wholly pure of erotic motives

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<sup>24</sup> cf. Plautus, *Poenulus*, *Rudens*.

toward the girl. In addition, the Lothario advises Xanthias not to be suspicious of him and his eye of appraisal toward her body parts, since his fortieth year of life has sputtered to a close (22-24), making him too old for love. Maintaining the irony of the previous stanzas, we can assume that the Lothario is “playing on young Xanthias’ naivete”<sup>25</sup> with the self-effacing suggestion that he is too old, at merely forty years of age, for a physical attraction toward Phyllis. While Horace often speaks of himself at a remove from the game of love, and often speaks looking back on his earlier life, he still appears in the *Odes* not to be too old for sex. Thus, there is even perhaps a subtle hint that the Lothario is sleeping with the *ancilla* on the side, unbeknownst to Xanthias; just as Xanthias ought to be “certain” that Phyllis is born of noble parents and is always faithful to him, so he should be “certain” that Horace is far too old to be any sort of erotic threat to him. Much like the ironic ending of Tibullus 1.4, in which a presumably detached speaker reveals himself to be still a participant in the game of love, here Horace’s didactic persona hints at continuing erotic captivation. *Odes* 2.4 demonstrates all the characteristics of the Lothario persona: a sense of humor with self-effacing moments, a didactic attitude toward his addressee, and an erotic expertise (here hidden by the ironic distance of the final stanza).

*Odes* 3.26 features another example of the Lothario persona from Horace. He describes himself as *idoneus puellis* (1) and having served *non sine gloria* (2), declaring in the first two lines that he was a successful lover. The litotes of *non sine gloria* serves to emphasize the success he has had in his erotic career. The *arma* that he refers to are

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<sup>25</sup> Garrison 1991, 265.

*funalia et vectes et arcus*, instruments of lovers (such as in a *paraclausithyron* situation); based on line 2 one can surmise that far from being locked out all night, the Lothario in fact used those tools to be able to break into a woman's chamber. Daniel Garrison<sup>26</sup> reads this poem as an imaginary inscription, a trope of Hellenistic epigram,<sup>27</sup> in which a retiring tradesman dedicates to the appropriate god or goddess the tools of his trade. With that in mind, one gathers from this poem that Horace is depicting himself as a craftsman of love, who has developed an expertise in the skills of love and is now "retiring."<sup>28</sup> Among the lover's instruments being dedicated in this poem is the *barbiton* (4), which has a double meaning here. On the one hand, the lover used it to play serenades for his object of desire (one more tool of the trade), but on the other hand the *barbiton* is the emblem of the lyric poet and signal of the poetic nature of the Lothario's existence. Horace is slyly winking at the reader, showing a self-awareness that he is a lyric poet, that this ode is not an (epigrammatic) inscription on a wall but a lyric poem, and that the speaker is a poetic persona.

While the Lothario's expertise in love and humorous bragging are on display in these first two stanzas, the third and final stanza marks a shift in tone. The dedication to Venus of the previous lines leads to an open prayer to the goddess, requesting a favor in love. Since the Lothario has presented himself earlier as an expert at love, a craftsman in its arts, he is surely not asking for help in wooing a girl. Rather, Horace seeks a punishment for Chloe; the *sublimi flagello* (11) with which Venus will touch her is a

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<sup>26</sup> Garrison 1991, 330.

<sup>27</sup> Many such epigrams can be found in Book VI of the Greek Anthology, in particular 6.117-6.132.

<sup>28</sup> It is likely that the reader was meant to compare this poem with the similar dedication of *Odes* 1.5.13-16, with a ring structure binding the entire publication. See Santirocco 1986, 145-146.

metaphor for the abstract concept of unrequited love. To determine what act of Chloe's has caused this desire for punishment in Horace, we must consider Sappho 1.

In that poem, Sappho (the speaker) prays to Aphrodite not to overwhelm her heart with distress over an unrequited love (1-4). Aphrodite herself, in response, instead promises that in the future she who has spurned Sappho's advances will suffer, now older, with an unrequited love of her own; by this punishment, the girl will know the pain and anguish that she has caused in Sappho, in a negative cycle of deferred erotic affection.<sup>29</sup> Horace uses the Sapphic model here in *Odes* 3.24, but with a sly twist.<sup>30</sup> Unlike the speaker in Sappho 1, the Lothario is praying directly for the divine punishment of reciprocation; he has retired from love and thus seeks no benefit to himself anymore.

Also, unlike the speaker in Sappho 1, who though experienced in love has had to call on Aphrodite for help again and again (δηῦτε...δηῦτε...δηῦτε, 15-18), the Lothario has presented himself (perhaps humorously) as an expert at wooing women, as the first two lines make clear. Chloe, though, is *arrogantem* (12), meaning she has scorned Horace's sexual advances—she is the only one (as the Lothario wants us to believe) who could resist the *arma* of this soldier of love (hence his statement that he has been a good lover *nuper*, good “until now”). This recent failure explains the modesty of his claim *militavi non sine gloria*, since he cannot deny that his career has ended on a sour note. Thus in the final two lines of the poem, Horace has some self-effacing fun with the

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<sup>29</sup> For a defense of this interpretation and critiques of earlier contrary ones, see Giacomelli 1980.

<sup>30</sup> Not the first time Horace has borrowed from and adapted Sappho; see *Odes* 1.13.

Lothario persona: he must abruptly and begrudgingly admit that his erotic prowess, heretofore invincible, nevertheless has limitations. The *magister* has met his match.

Two of Horace's epodes, *Epodes* 8 and 12, deal humorously with the Lothario's experiences with older female sexual partners. David Armstrong<sup>31</sup> describes the speaker of these poems as a "midnight cowboy" who is "too disgusted with his anonymous, decrepit female client to function." These women have gross, disgusting bodies (described in great detail by Horace, showing a somewhat cruel sense of humor) that they try to hide with multiple applications of primitive makeup while attempting to induce the Lothario to sleep with them some more. Jeffrey Henderson<sup>32</sup> has shown that such women are stock characters from Attic Old Comedy, where playwrights "exploit the all-too-human failings of aging women, the sexual ones of course possessing the greatest comic potential." In Aristophanes' *Ekklesiazousai*, he notes as an example, three older women wear lots of makeup and sing sexy songs about their superior erotic skills. Horace is adapting this comic trope and looking at it from the point of view of the Lothario, who has to submit himself to the sexual advances of such women. Armstrong<sup>33</sup> suggests that the theme of lusty old women is "somehow connected with Horace's life-long refusal of long-term emotional commitments; the old (really only older) women are a threat to his lifestyle." They remind him of wives, and marriage is the kind of relationship Horace strenuously avoids.

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<sup>31</sup> Armstrong 1989, 61.

<sup>32</sup> Henderson 1987, esp. 117.

<sup>33</sup> Armstrong 1989, 60.

In *Epode* 12, the Lothario declares his sexual prowess in implicit statements. (It is important to remember that as Horace describes the lusty behavior of his sexual partner, he is also implicitly describing the extent of his sexual ability—he is able to induce such behavior in bed.) The old woman has broken her bed (12) through lovemaking, yet the true cause of this is that Horace is able to bring her to such throes of sexual ecstasy (*subando*, 11). His superior technique has made her so hot for the Lothario that she compares herself to *acres lupos* and *leones* (25-26). Even in the very first line of the poem, Horace describes his lover as *nigris dignissima barris*; while this image most likely refers to the well-worn state of the lover’s pudenda, it may also hint at the large size of the Lothario’s own genitals. An alternative reading of this joke, however, would play into Horace’s antipathy toward further sexual activity with the old woman. Pliny the Elder<sup>34</sup> writes that elephants mate “every two years, as they say, and on five days of each year and no more” (*biennio quinis, ut ferunt, cuiusque anni diebus nec amplius*). While he writes several decades after Horace, this knowledge presumably could have been available to Romans even earlier (and the phrase *ut ferunt* suggests that it was perhaps familiar to an educated class of Romans—familiar enough for a learned man to reference in poetry). The well-known sexual restraint of the elephant then contrasts with Horace’s older lover; the Lothario is advising her that she ought to cut back on her sexual activity, down to about once every two years.

It is fitting that Horace should instruct her to curtail her sexual appetite, because his self-description, despite the usual professions of erotic expertise, suggests that he

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<sup>34</sup> *Naturalis Historia* 8.5.13.

cannot keep up sexually with the older woman.<sup>35</sup> With the phrase *nec firmo iuveni* (3), Horace suggests that he is no longer the tireless lover he used to be, and his lover still has a *indomitam rabiem* while he has a *pene solute* (8-9). The old woman is angry that Lesbia (who must be acting as some kind of procuress or female pimp) set her up with Horace, who is unfortunately *inertem* (17), while she had at one point had a chance to hook up with a *taurum*<sup>36</sup> named Amyntos of Cos. This man is described by her as having an *indomito inguine* (19) and solid *nervos*—as opposed to the Lothario’s member, conquered after just one sexual session (15-16). Thus we have conflicting claims; Horace wants to present himself as a bed-breaking sexual dynamo, but cannot hide the fact that his stamina has run out with this aging woman.

The ostensible explanation for this inconsistent erotic behavior is that the Lothario is repulsed by the older woman—and with *mulier* (1), her greater-than-normal age is emphasized. The disgusting attributes of the woman listed in 4-11 (a synaesthetic display of stench, hideous sights, and foul textures) justify his spotty performance, in contrast with her stated claims: Horace flees the woman (*fugis*, 25) due to what even she asserts is her voracious sexual appetite (25-26). But the Lothario is able to have sex with Inachia three times in one night (15) while mustering only one session with the aging woman, so clearly Horace fails with her not because of his lack of stamina, but because he is disgusted by her smell and her rough looks smeared over with makeup. Thus, despite the embarrassing details of sexual inability, the Lothario successfully puts the blame on the

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<sup>35</sup> The *Epodes* were published in 29 BC, when Horace was 37 years old.

<sup>36</sup> Garrison 1991, 189: “a metaphor for a prodigiously endowed sexual athlete.”



ugly old woman with humorous descriptions of her hideous state, and he subtly maintains impressive credentials for himself.

*Epode* 8 also features a sexually-aggressive older woman whose demands cannot be met by Horace. The Lothario again admits that something *enervet* his *vires* (2), and evidently this is a recurring problem, because his lover has been asking *longo saeculo* (1) why it occurs. Horace quickly explains that it is because the older woman is too aged and ugly to sleep with (3-10), and that moreover his groin is too proud (*superbo inguine*, 19) to stay erect for her—unless she is willing to perform fellatio on it (*ore adlaborandum*, 20). Unlike in the last poem the Lothario gives us no sense that he is normally an excellent lover. Because of this absence, the poem has a whiff of desperation, as if Horace needs to convince even himself that the reason he cannot perform sexually is the woman's fault. This sentiment perhaps makes the request in the last two lines less demeaning to her and more anxious for him. The tension between the stated claims of the woman's ugliness and the underlying unease about impotence lets Horace both brag about sexual expertise while delicately poking fun at the Lothario's personality.

This woman is interested in Stoic philosophy, and she has *libelli Stoici* sitting on her pillows (15). Horace is not interested; either she herself suggests that this is the reason he cannot perform, or he brings it up as a way to mock her pretensions to philosophy. The irony of course is that the problem for them in the poem is that the Lothario's member is, in fact, "stoic." Horace describes himself as *inlitterati* (17), specifically his genitals, although this is a fairly clear case of *pars pro toto*. Such a comment is strange, since Horace's familiarity with Greek poetry is clear from his own

works; in fact the *Epodes* are a Greek genre in Greek meters, with a debt to Archilochus, and their publication is the point at which Horace becomes a “Hellenistic Roman” poet. Perhaps the Lothario wishes to distance his inconsistent member from any mention of Stoicism, a philosophy promoting inner calm and self-control (too reminiscent of flaccidity); Epicureanism promotes physical pleasure without emotional passion, a strategy the Lothario will need to employ while having sex with an ugly old woman. Certainly, Horace the Epicurean is teasing Stoicism, going on to say that being unfamiliar with Stoic philosophy does not explain his impotence (with the implication that on the contrary, the Stoics are the bad lovers). We see in these two selections from Horace’s *Epodes* more examples of the Lothario persona: a talented lover (of whom women cannot get enough) in a didactic role (instructing the women on how frequently they should make love or on the source of his fatigue) who uses humor (cruel comic invective in these poems) with occasionally a self-effacing aspect (such as making light of his sporadic impotence).

The Lothario persona can be found in several other poems in the corpus of Horatian erotic poetry. In *Odes* 3.28, Horace wishes to celebrate a festival day by drinking heavily and singing with an energetic (*strenua*, 3) exotic Eastern courtesan named Lyde; like many courtesans of the classical world, Lyde has training in music and lyre-playing (11). The two will sing together, Horace of Neptune (both as the male figure and in honor of the Neptunalia) and Lyde of Aphrodite (both as the female figure and due to the erotic nature of the setting). Even at night they will continue singing (16), only now the song is a *nenia*, a funeral dirge; this song serves as a *memento mori*, reminding Lyde

that she must seize the day and enjoy life while she is still alive (thus, an invitation to seek pleasure, such as from sexual activity). The fact that the nighttime activities receive not only a mention but have the last line of the poem all to themselves makes the statement full of innuendo. The tone of this poem is light and humorous, the theme is undeniably romantic, and the Lothario shows off his wooing prowess to the reader. In *Odes* 1.27, Horace enters a banquet in which a fight has broken out and calms down the partygoers with admonitions. Steering the conversation toward love, the Lothario asks one young man (*puer*, 20) how his current romantic situation is treating him, and continuing the didactic role toward the *sodales*, he weighs in on the lovers that the young man has taken (now and in the past). With gentle kidding he compares the women of the youth's romantic career to various mythological beasts in a humorous display of hyperbole.

In all of Horace's poems analyzed in this chapter, the elements of the sexual personae of the Lothario can be detected. Horace takes up a didactic role toward some character within the poem, doling out romantic advice and acting like a *magister* of life and of love. Moreover, the Lothario sets himself up to be an expert in erotic matters and in the way love operates. He also uses humor to a greater degree in these poems than in those of the other personae; to some extent this is the romantic charm of the Lothario, while it also can be attributed to Horace's playful manipulation of the poetic material. This is especially true in those frequent instances when the humor of the poem is slightly self-effacing and "pulls the rug out" from under the carefully-cultivated persona of the Lothario. While the Lothario comprises just one of the several sexual personae on display

in the erotic poetry of Horace, he is perhaps the most prominent facet of Horace's multifaceted "character" and in many ways lays the foundation from which the other sexual personae react and derive meaning. Subsequent analysis of the other sexual personae of Horace's erotic poetry will make this primacy clearer.

## Chapter Two: The Excluded Lover Persona

The next sexual persona in Horace's erotic poetry to be evaluated is "Horace the Excluded Lover," a persona with certain recognizable attributes of its own. This title is drawn from Frank Copley's 1956 book *Exclusus Amator: A Study in Latin Love Poetry*. Copley traced the characteristics of the *paraclausithyron*, the set-piece poem of a "locked-out lover," from its creation as a Greek literary motif to its adoption by comic playwrights, the Republican Neoterics, and finally the elegists of the Augustan period. For Copley, Horace inherited the experiments of the *paraclausithyron* form from Catullus and adopted certain elements of tone and psychology in crafting a "new and homogeneous poetic type."<sup>37</sup> The Excluded Lover persona expands on this literary motif and describes a Horatian character found in several poems of the *Odes* and *Epodes* who has certain recurring characteristics, regardless of whether or not he is found in a proper *paraclausithyron*.

The Excluded Lover is distinct from the Lothario first in terms of tone; whereas the Lothario uses a humorous tone and often employs a self-effacing demeanor, the Excluded Lover is generally serious, speaks with genuine emotion, and describes his plight without irony. The Excluded Lover has a sad, dejected personality, which is the result of having been rejected by some girl (or boy) whom he desires to take as a lover, often because he has started to become too old for love. Initial rejection usually does not stop the Excluded Lover, but rather he continually seeks what he cannot obtain; his desideratum is unattainable. The Excluded Lover persona has some points of contact with

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<sup>37</sup> Copley 1956, 69.

the elegists (whom the Lothario mocked and criticized, such as in *Odes* 1.33), but an important distinction is that while the elegists were generally obsessed with a single love object (Delia, Cynthia, et al.), the Horatian Excluded Lover is unafraid to (eventually) direct his affections toward a new love object, of either gender, and in fact is often aware of the perpetual mutability of romance and relationships. As with the Lothario, the Excluded Lover persona is found in several poems within both the *Odes* and the *Epodes*.

*Odes* 1.13 provides our first example of the Excluded Lover persona, in which Horace is jealous of Lydia's attention to Telephus. The very first stanza marks the presence of the Excluded Lover with *vae*, the standard interjection of lament,<sup>38</sup> appearing in line 3. In addition to this elegaic reference, Horace also recalls Catullus 51 (itself an adaptation of Sappho 31) with his description of the physical changes afflicting the Excluded Lover through jealousy. His heart burns with "troublesome gall" (*difficili bile*, 3-4), his color changes as he loses his *mens* (5-6), a tear falls down his cheek (6-7), and he is worn down by an internal fire (7-8). These intertextual references signal to the educated reader that Horace is operating within a familiar literary trope; the Excluded Lover's Catullan/Sapphic self-description subtly reveals that his is a poetic persona.

The second person verbs in lines 3 and 13 suggest that Horace and Lydia communicate with each other ("When you praise," "If you would listen" imply that they actually talk to one another). Perhaps, then, the Excluded Lover is competing directly with Telephus for Lydia's attention; my reading of *si me satis audias* (13) is that Horace is saying "If you would heed my amorous requests" or "If you would make me your only

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<sup>38</sup> Propertius 4.4.68; Catullus 8.15; Vergil, *Eclogues* 9.28; Plautus *Mercator* 217, *Mostellaria* 368.

lover and forget about Telephus." This Telephus is a younger man, maybe much younger than the Excluded Lover, for he is described as having a *cervicem roseam* (2) and *cerea bracchia* (2-3).

This age difference is appropriate, because the Excluded Lover is setting himself up in contrast to Telephus in terms of their styles of loving. Telephus is an "angry young man" who burns hot: he gets drunk on wine (*immodicae mero / rixae*, 10-11) and beats her *candidos umeros* (9-10), and he makes love so passionately (*furens*, 11) that he bites her lips while kissing them. In contrast to such a tempestuous lover, Horace sets himself up as the kind of *perpetuum* (14) lover for whom Lydia hopes; he offers an *inrupta copula* (18) and promises no *malis querimoniis* (18-19) to her. Telephus is a younger, more passionate (too passionate) lover, while the Excluded Lover is an older, more mature, more moderate lover (finding, as in *Odes* 1.23, that his advanced years can in fact serve as evidence of suitability as a romantic partner). Fittingly, the speaker's tone in the stanzas describing Telephus is "Catullan," full of angry jealousy, while the last two stanzas are statelier and calmer, as befits an older man.

In contrast to the Lothario persona, the Excluded Lover of this ode maintains a serious tone; we do not see any traces of humor. Far from bragging about his sexual prowess, the dejected Excluded Lover here laments his rejection by Lydia in favor of the younger Telephus. He wants to be the lover of Lydia but cannot win her over. Moreover, his Catullan/Sapphic description of his physical afflictions (as a result of his jealousy) marks the Excluded Lover as a poetic persona.

The Excluded Lover can also be found in *Odes* 1.23, where Horace seeks a young girl, Chloe, who fears and shuns him. Chloe's youth is cited as the reason for her timidity toward Horace (she is *hinnuleo similis*, 1), though in the last line Chloe is called *tempestiva viro*, implying that she is of the age when girls first start taking husbands (and thus sexual partners). While the Excluded Lover invites Chloe to him, she shuns him (*vitae*, 1) like a scared fawn searching for its mother in the woods. This image suggests that Chloe is at the threshold of maturation, and though physically ready (*tempestiva*) for sexual activity, emotionally she still seeks the comforts of hearth and home, and self-identifies as a child (who needs her mother for psychological comfort). Chloe's mother may even have interacted with Horace, as well. The word *pavidam* in line 2 actually modifies *matrem*, but this is probably a case of transferred epithet (unless the Excluded Lover means to suggest that Chloe's mother is afraid of him, too).

Horace maintains the animal imagery while making his own defense; he envisions himself as a green lizard (6-7) startling the fawn in the woods, and he denies that his sexual prowess would shatter her as if he were a rough tiger or Gaetulian lion (9-10). Indeed, the fawn's fear is a groundless one (*vano*, 3); it is "so childish that it is startled without cause."<sup>39</sup> It is perhaps this age difference between the Excluded Lover and Chloe that is the source of the anxiety. As in *Odes* 1.13, Horace must contend that in fact his advanced age makes him a better lover, because the "wildness" of youth is no longer in him; unlike a younger lover, Horace will not treat the girl as a tiger treats its prey. Horace is all too aware of Chloe's extreme youth ("the name suggests greenness and

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<sup>39</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 275.



immaturity")<sup>40</sup> and tries to convince her in this poem that she needs to say goodbye to Mother and make herself available to men (11-12).

This ode seems at first glance to be somewhat light, but the choice of animal metaphors for Horace suggests stung feelings at being thought so terrifying, so inhuman, by Chloe. Nisbet and Hubbard<sup>41</sup> note a poem by Anacreon (fr. 417 PMG) in which he compares a girl to a "high-spirited filly." Anacreon's playful sexuality (finding a "rider" for her) is toned down drastically in this poem by Horace; the humor is replaced by tenderness of feeling. The Excluded Lover has again been rejected by a girl; he wants a lover whom he is unable to obtain.

The Excluded Lover persona also appears in *Epode* 11, in which Horace confesses that he continually falls in love with people, girls and boys. The speaker is *amore percussum gravi* (2), but it has been 3 years since he was in love with Inachia. The Excluded Lover goes on to describe his actions during that time of so much woe, *tanti mali* (7). At parties, Horace's *languor et silentium et spiritus* (9-10) were proof of his love-lorn state. A wealthier man (11-12) had claimed Inachia instead of the Excluded Lover, despite his *candidum ingenium*. After drinking wine, Horace's tongue would loosen up and he would air his complaints, claiming that eventually he would quit trying to compete with rivals unequal (*imparibus*, 18) in terms of wealth or beauty or status. But drunkenly walking home (possibly ejected, *iussus abire domum* (20), because of his loud sloppy lamenting), he would wind his way to Inachia's *non amicos postis* (20) and her

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<sup>40</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 275.

<sup>41</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 274.

*limina dura* (21), the site of many a *paraclausithyron* for the Excluded Lover. Now, in the present, his unrequited infatuation with Inachia has been replaced by one for the young man Lyciscus, who claims to be able to outdo any girl (23-24); Horace admits that the only thing that can free him from this crush is an *alius ardor* (27). The implication of these last lines is that the Excluded Lover is caught in a never-ending cycle of temporary but usually unfulfilled romantic desire, each step of which ends when Horace falls in love with a new person—*puer* or *puella*.

As in other poems featuring the Excluded Lover persona, Horace abandons the playful humor of the Lothario to talk about the suffering of a man in love. Indeed, "in this poem Horace turns from the abusive iambic mood of the epodes that bracket it on either side and plays with the love themes to be developed in the Odes."<sup>42</sup> Rejected by Inachia in favor of a rich man, the Excluded Lover earns a bad reputation throughout the town (*per urbem fabula*, 7-8) for his dejected demeanor at feasts, which friends were unable to soothe. The repeated episodes where Horace recreates his locked-out nights emphasize how no amount of pleading could save him from rejection; his *candidum ingenium* is not enough romantic skill to conquer money. It is ambiguous whether Lyciscus will shun the Excluded Lover as Inachia had, but with the last lines Horace suggests that reciprocation may not even matter; falling in love with someone else may happen anyway. Finally, the poem opens with Horace talking about writing poetry, a slight nod toward the existence of the poetic persona of the Excluded Lover at work in this epode.

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<sup>42</sup> Garrison 1991, 186.

In *Epode* 15, the Excluded Lover persona also appears, with tones similar to that of *Epode* 11. Here Horace angrily laments the treachery that has taken place by his lover Neaera, and predicts a turn of fortune for both her and her new beau. The Excluded Lover spends the first ten lines of the poem describing the solemn vow that Neaera made to him promising eternal loyalty, although since he is speaking from the benefit of hindsight, he knows to describe her as *magnorum numen laesura deorum* (3). "The future participle suggests the inevitability, and perhaps even the intention, of treachery."<sup>43</sup>

These ten lines are followed by the threatening address *O dolitura mea multum virtute Neaera* in line 11, although no actual retribution by Horace is ever specified within the poem. The Excluded Lover is angry at the *adsiduas noctes* (13) that Neaera has spent with a more favored rival, *potiori*. Garrison detects in this word choice an undertone of machismo, "as if the rival were more forceful or better entitled to her favors."<sup>44</sup> If so, this shows the Excluded Lover a 98-pound weakling being made to look ridiculous by the Lothario whose persona Horace assumes in other poems. Rejected by Neaera, Horace vows to find a new lover (14) and claims that he will never again be swayed by her beauty (15) as long as grief enters into him (16). The Excluded Lover's heartbroken laments have none of the humor of the Lothario's poems, but instead show a genuine sadness.

Horace then addresses the man who stole Neaera away from him, and calls him *felicior* and *superbus meo malo* (17-18), emphasizing his dejection and sadness. As in

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<sup>43</sup> Garrison 1991, 192.

<sup>44</sup> Garrison 1991, 192.

*Epode* 11 he cites the rival's extreme wealth (19-20) or beauty (22) as potential reasons Horace could not compete with the man, though in this case he mentions these possible reasons (ones almost certainly imagined in his jealous mind) only to show that their power to sway Neaera will ultimately be futile—Neaera will move on to another man and reject him just as she rejects the Excluded Lover now. It is then that Horace will laugh (24), though joylessly and cruelly at his rival; *risero* is in the future perfect to show that "the rival's comeuppance [is] as good as done."<sup>45</sup>

The tone of this poem shows the romantic nihilism typical of those whose hearts were recently broken, but there is also an underlying suggestion that permanent or even long-term relationships cannot last, and that short-term relationships or flings are preferable. This concept is a familiar sentiment in the Horatian corpus, and perhaps the true message of *Epode* 15 is that the Excluded Lover has forgotten to abide by that Horatian rule of romance. To desire an eternal pledge of loyalty, as the Excluded Lover does from Neaera at the beginning of this epode, is to want something one cannot actually have.<sup>46</sup>

*Odes* 3.10, a *paraclausithyron*, also gives us an example of the Excluded Lover persona. The *paraclausithyron* poem is attested as early as Alcaeus 374, and the Hellenistic epigrammatists gave many variations on the theme which were later taken up

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<sup>45</sup> Garrison 1991, 193.

<sup>46</sup> As an alternative example, *Odes* 2.8 addresses a girl named Barine, also known for breaking vows of love. In this case, Barine's treachery comes not only with impunity but also with actual physical improvement to her body: the more she swears falsely, the better she looks (5-12). As Nisbet and Hubbard (1978, 122-124) point out, however, Horace keeps himself detached and at a distance from Barine's actions—he is not involved with her—and so he can talk about her transgressions "not with injured indignation but cynical amusement."

by the Roman poets (as well as the Roman comic stage).<sup>47</sup> Certain elements of the *paraclausithyron* thus became standards, such as the hyperbolic descriptions of the weather or of the obstinacy of the woman. While these literary tropes have a degree of levity to them, it is still possible to write a serious poem with such humorous elements; Nisbet and Rudd<sup>48</sup> correctly note the "overstatement" of Lyce's hard-heartedness and of the rain and snow in this poem, but their description of *Odes* 3.10 as merely a "deflating parody" ignores the genuine emotion of the Excluded Lover in this scene. The fact that Horace writes within a well-known literary trope, the *paraclausithyron*, does however signal to the reader that a literary persona is at work in the poem. While the "locked-out lover" scene probably occurred in real life,<sup>49</sup> the familiar artificiality of this kind of poem suggests that Horace speaks within an erotic persona, in this case the Excluded Lover.

The most notable aspect of this poem is that Horace's inamorata is married. This fact first appears in line 2, when Horace identifies Lyce as *saevo nupta viro*. The ambiguity whether this vocative address applies actually to Lyce or hypothetically (as part of the *si*-construction begun in line 1) is explained by *vir Pieria paelica saucius* (15); clearly Lyce does in fact have a husband. While a hypothetical Scythian husband would certainly be a *saevus vir*, the uncertainty of Horace's meaning in this phrase suggests that Lyce's husband may also be *saevus*, and certainly a husband whose lovesickness for a Pierian mistress is known even to Horace could be considered cruel.

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<sup>47</sup> Nisbet and Rudd 2004, 141.

<sup>48</sup> Nisbet and Rudd 2004, 141-142.

<sup>49</sup> Nisbet and Rudd 2004, 141.

Lyce's rejection of the Excluded Lover in this poem has an obvious literal manifestation: he has been locked out of her mansion and must lie alongside the front door, in a clear state of romantic rejection. This causes Horace to have to endure harsh Roman weather (*ventis* and *nives*, 7). Thus the Excluded Lover must suffer physical pain from the elements as well as mental and emotional distress from his poor treatment from Lyce. If one accepts that the hyperbolic description of extreme weather is more of a literary trope common to the *paraclausithyron* than an actual statement of meteorological realities, perhaps the snow and rain and wind are symbolic and act as objective correlatives to the internal suffering and anguish of the Excluded Lover. Horace's dejected state has altered his perceptions such that minor inconveniences, like a little rain or a chill, are exaggerated into greater calamities.

The fact that Lyce is married does not stop the Excluded Lover from pursuing her, nor has it stopped other men—Horace has rivals. The Excluded Lover notes that Lyce is indifferent to the *viola pallor amantium* (14), and his admonition that Lyce's father didn't raise her to be like Penelope, *difficilem procis* (11), possibly hints at other multiple suitors. They, along with Horace, have had their romantic appeals rejected by Lyce—little comfort to the Excluded Lover. Ultimately, he throws himself on Lyce's mercy and appeals to her sense of pity: *supplicibus tuis / parcas* (16-17), the final plea of desperation.

As per the norm, the Excluded Lover desires what he cannot have, but in this case that happens to be a married woman. Here he errs somewhat, as he did in *Epode* 15, in that he has forgotten one of Horace's rules for women. In *Satires* 1.2 Horace advises not

to sleep with other men's wives, listing all of the terrors that can befall the man caught in bed with another man's wife: *audire est operae pretium procedere recte / qui moechis non voltis ut omni parte laborent* (37-38). Indeed, it is not for reasons of morality that he warns against committing adultery, but merely for reasons of danger: *desine matronas sectarier unde laboris / plus haurire mali est quam ex re decerpere fructus* (78-79). The inherent riskiness of adultery is counter to the Epicurean desire to seek the kind of pleasure that avoids pain. While the Excluded Lover of *Odes* 3.10 does not appear to be in any physical danger from Lyce's husband (Nisbet and Rudd<sup>50</sup> note the possibility that Lyce's husband travels to Pieria on business and thus is absent from this scene), nevertheless he exposes himself to pain and suffering at the hands of Mother Nature and of his own misplaced affection. Thus his dejected state may be the result of a failure to heed Horace's own romantic rules. Only in the last two lines of the poem does the Excluded Lover appear to be learning his lesson; he declares to Lyce that *non semper erit patiens* (19-20), enduring the bad weather and the physical rejection by her. Even the Excluded Lover is aware that this married woman is not worth it to endure such hardships; Horace cannot stay obsessed with one object of desire the way the Roman elegists normally could.

The attributes of the Excluded Lover persona can be identified in all of the odes and epodes discussed in this chapter. Horace adopts a more serious tone in these poems than he does in the poems of the Lothario persona. His demeanor is one of wounded pride, sadness, and dejection, the cause of which is the Excluded Lover's romantic

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<sup>50</sup> Nisbet and Rudd 2004, 147.

rejection or betrayal by a lover, often a woman but of either gender. Despite the rejection, Horace continues to desire this unattainable object of his affection. The Excluded Lover stands in stark contrast to the Lothario persona, and in some sense is likely meant to be read as a reaction to it; the aloof kidder can only persist for so long until an experience of real emotional distress occurs, and moreover, the Excluded Lover often incurs his dejection from a failure to abide by the romantic rules set up by the Lothario. The Lothario and the Excluded Lover are two of the several sexual personae to be found in the erotic poetry of Horace, but two that have a close interpretative bond.



### Chapter Three: The Ephebophile Persona

The third sexual persona to be examined in the erotic poetry of Horace is "Horace the Ephebophile," a persona with a key distinction from the others. Whereas the other sexual personae are defined by various attributes of their own personalities and behaviors, the Ephebophile is defined by the object of his sexual desire. Generally, the Roman poets made no distinction between a man engaged in erotic pursuits with a woman and one engaged with a boy. Indeed, Craig Williams speaks of a "tradition embodied in the sexual personae of such poets as Catullus, Horace, Tibullus, and Martial (all of whom exercise their masculinity with women and boys indiscriminately)."<sup>51</sup> Moreover, in the previous two chapters several poems have been examined in which a Horatian sexual persona has declared love for a woman and for a boy within the same poem; these two desires were not considered incompatible within one man. The Horatian Ephebophile persona is distinct from these other sexual personae in his sole (or chief) desire for a boy as a sexual partner; his treatment of his romantic object is subtly distinguished from the treatment given by the Lothario or the Excluded Lover.

A further attribute of the Ephebophile persona is that his eye for romantic qualities in a sexual partner differs slightly from the norm of most Roman boy-lovers. In general, Roman pederasts sought slave boys until the cusp of manhood (the threshold being the beginning of facial hair's appearance on the boy's face, though sometimes the boys were quite young and totally hairless); the boy often had long hair and was vaguely "effeminate." But Horace often seeks male sexual partners who are strongly masculine

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<sup>51</sup> Williams 1999, 168.

figures and, though young, nevertheless fail to resemble a girl in the way most pederasts' lovers do. The "perfected virility—the agility, strength, corporeal mastery—of Ligurinus and his kind represents the ultimate narcissistic object of desire" for Horace,<sup>52</sup> an atypical version of the pederasty often found in classical poetry. Thomas Hubbard has argued that Athenian pederasty, far from making boys "effeminate," was meant to be a "masculinizing" process, whereby boys were trained and mentored in proper men's behavior.<sup>53</sup> The Ephebophile's love objects, however, are older and are already behaving like men.<sup>54</sup> Several examples of this Ephebophile persona can be found in Horace's *Odes* and *Epodes*.

The characteristic elements of the Ephebophile persona appear implicitly in *Odes* 1.8, in which Horace chastises a woman, Lydia, for softening a man named Sybaris. His name is chosen for its reference to the 6<sup>th</sup>-century Greek city in southern Italy known for its luxurious lifestyle. Athenaeus (518C-521D) gives several examples of decadence for which the city was infamous, including "piped wine, anti-noise by-laws, patent rights for cooks, and tax-relief for the eel-mongers."<sup>55</sup> Aristophanes mentions Sybaris in *Wasps* 1258-9 as a place from which witty tales and jokes come (λόγον ἄστεϊόν and γέλοιον). N&H also note<sup>56</sup> that "erotic novelettes called Sybaritika were current in Horace's world," citing Ovid's *Trist.* 2.417 *nec qui composuit nuper Sybaritica fugit*. Diodorus

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<sup>52</sup> Oliensis 2007, 231; she cites Desbordes 1979.

<sup>53</sup> Hubbard 2011.

<sup>54</sup> Alternatively, the brief poem *Odes* 1.38 gives a glimpse of a more traditional pederastic scene, as Horace speaks to a slave boy (a *puer*) serving him wine (as in a sympotic setting) in a grotto. At only eight lines in length, though, the poem does not give us a full enough picture to confidently assign an erotic quality.

<sup>55</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 111.

<sup>56</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 111.

Siculus (12.9) says that the city of Sybaris grew wealthy (and thus soft) because of its policy of giving full citizenship to immigrants, which other Greek city-states generally refused to do.

Lydia is a name that Nisbet and Hubbard<sup>57</sup> call “exotic” and say “suggests luxury and voluptuousness.” The gold-rich region of Lydia, in Asia Minor, was once ruled by the fantastically rich king Croesus, and Horace’s Greek predecessor and model Sappho<sup>58</sup> writes about a foot bound in a “beautiful Lydian work.” A dichotomy is set up in this poem between the Roman masculinity of Sybaris (named after an Italian city) and the luxury of Lydia (named after a region of the East). Just as the city Sybaris was corrupted by wealth, so has the character Sybaris been corrupted by Lydia. Indeed, Sybaris’ problem in this poem is that he has allowed himself to become too involved with one woman. Much like the Excluded Lover in *Epodes* 11 and 15, who had fallen too heavily in love with one woman and become weakened or impotent, Sybaris in this poem has ignored the Horatian precept of shunning monogamy in favor of having many short-term relationships.

Sybaris’ Roman masculinity is at stake in this poem, for Horace gives a detailed list (emphasized by the repeated use of *cur* throughout) of the manly activities in which Sybaris, induced by Lydia into a personality-altering infatuation, no longer participates. He no longer trains in horseback riding with his soldier friends (5-7), swims in the Tiber

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<sup>57</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 110.

<sup>58</sup> fr. 39 L-P: Λύδιον κάλον ἔργον.

(8), oils himself up for wrestling (8-10), practices with weapons (10-11), or practices his discus and javelin throw (11-12).

These are all activities that Sybaris could have performed on the Campus Martius (4) or the neighboring Tiber River, a wide open space in Horace's day which served as a public park for the Romans. Strabo (5.3.8), writing in the Late Augustan period two or three decades after Horace, says that "And the magnitude of the plain is a marvel, furnishing both chariot-races and other horseback riding unhindered by such a great crowd of people training with a ball or a ring or in wrestling." As a public space where men could train, the Campus Martius was more than just a place for fresh air and exercise in Rome: the Campus Martius is also the site where the Ephebophile is fond of going to cruise around admiring young men's bodies.

The Campus Martius area of Rome underwent extensive renovation in the Augustan period, including public baths and swimming areas.<sup>59</sup> Meanwhile, the Tiber River on the Campus was a poorly-tended water source often full of silt, garbage, and human waste; Horace calls it a yellow (*flavus*) river at *Odes* 2.3.18. The Tiber was also used as a waterway for shipping, and docks were built on the Tiber in the northern part of the Campus.<sup>60</sup> The types of crowds that could be found swimming in the Tiber River on the Campus Martius would not have been there by choice, so it is possible that these swimmers were of a socially disreputable group.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Rehak 2006, 20-25.

<sup>60</sup> Favro 1996, 112, 185.

<sup>61</sup> The idea of this paragraph was suggested to me by Rabun Taylor.

Rabun Taylor<sup>62</sup> has written that men in urban Rome who sought adult Roman males as sexual partners belonged to a furtive and socially outcast subculture in Augustan Rome; brothels and bath-houses became common meeting places for them to interact. “Roman baths,” he writes, “were often the venue where older, more established men could solicit males of lesser age or status to play the active role.” Examples in the Imperial period attest to older men looking in baths for men with large genitals to serve as active sexual partners.<sup>63</sup> The Campus Martius area of the Tiber may have been another such meeting place for homosexual Roman men to cruise for potential sexual partners. The choice of the Ephebophile’s lovers to swim in it possibly suggests that they associated with a lower-class fringe crowd or some kind of gay subculture at Rome. Indeed, *Catalepton* 13 (a satirical poem believed by at least one scholar<sup>64</sup> to be an early work of Horace) suggests that a well-known (and socially disdained) practice at Rome was to go down to the Tiber and make homosexual liaisons with the sailors passing by. Thus the reference to swimming in the Tiber may carry extra connotative baggage as a (sub)cultural signifier.

As Ellen Oliensis<sup>65</sup> has pointed out, the unstated reason for Horace’s complaint to Lydia in this poem is that he wishes to be able to see Sybaris working out again in public; the Ephebophile’s familiarity with Sybaris’ workout routine on the Campus Martius implies that he frequently admires his body out in public, and it is possible that there are

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<sup>62</sup> Taylor 1997, esp. 349.

<sup>63</sup> Juvenal 9.33-37; Petronius 92.

<sup>64</sup> Nemethy 1908 inserts it among the *Epodes*.

<sup>65</sup> Oliensis 2007, 231.

others as well who regularly check Sybaris out and miss his presence. Lydia's control of Sybaris denies the Ephebophile the opportunity to gaze at Sybaris' muscular body working out in the open. The phenomenon at work in this poem is the reverse of what is customary: usually pederasty is the softening force (or the ideal sexual object of an older man is a softer, effeminate youth), but here a heterosexual romantic relationship is softening a normally manly object of homosexual desire.

The Ephebophile's attraction to manly pursuits can also be found in *Odes* 3.7, in which Horace advises a woman whose husband is away on business not to cheat on him with her neighbor, Enipeus. Horace warns the woman, Asterie, to make sure she does not fall in love with Enipeus, "seductively"<sup>66</sup> noting his charms: *quamvis non alius flectere equum sciens / aequae conspicitur gramine Martio / nec quisquam citus aequae / Tusco denatat alveo* (25-28). The same location, the Campus Martius, "sets off the glamour of Enipeus"<sup>67</sup> as it did for Sybaris in *Odes* 1.8. The Ephebophile is able to empathize with Asterie's situation (enticed by the tantalizing body of Enipeus) because he too is attracted to the man, and for all the same reasons. The public display of Enipeus' manly pursuits grants Horace the opportunity to admire his form. As Oliensis<sup>68</sup> puts it, "Who is out there looking on appreciatively or swooningly as the young men strip down to work out on the Field of Mars and to plunge their hardened bodies into the lambent Tiber?"

The Ephebophile persona, and its connection to the Campus Martius, can also be found in *Odes* 4.1, the first of the two Ligurinus Odes. This ode has two main parts, with

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<sup>66</sup> Oliensis 2007, 231.

<sup>67</sup> Oliensis 2007, 231.

<sup>68</sup> Oliensis 2007, 231.

the Ephebophile persona emerging in the second; this turn is quite similar to that of Tibullus 1.4, written earlier than *Odes* 4.1, where Tibullus spends 80 lines crafting an image of sexual aloofness and mastery, only to break down in the last four lines and admit that he is in love with the boy Marathus and that all his erotic teachings are *vana magisteria* (84). In the first part of *Odes* 4.1, Horace says that he is now too old for love (it is ten years after the publication of the first three books of the *Odes*, and Horace is now 51 years old) and that Venus should direct her attentions to a more suitable younger man, in particular Paullus Fabius Maximus.<sup>69</sup> Horace begins to make a transition out of this first part of the poem at lines 29-32 by reaffirming (with no less than five uses of *nec*, a polysyndeton which makes one suspect he is trying to convince himself) that he is too old for love, and that *nec femina nec puer* can delight him anymore.

But in the second part, starting at line 33 with an emphatic *sed*, the Ephebophile undercuts this denial by admitting his feelings for a young man named Ligurinus, feelings which manifest themselves in not only the Sapphic/Catullan ways (a single tear on the cheek and loss of speech, 33-36) but also in dreams.<sup>70</sup> The Ephebophile admits that in *nocturnis somniis* (37) he embraces Ligurinus held fast, and also<sup>71</sup> he follows Ligurinus around the Campus Martius and in the Tiber. As before, these references signal that

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<sup>69</sup> Interestingly, Horace's praise of Paullus borders on the erotic: he is *et nobilis et decens* (13) and a *centum puer artium* (15), which foreshadows the appearance of Ligurinus as a muscular athlete later in the ode. Praise of leaders' beauty, with erotic imagery, had a long tradition in Greek encomiastic verse, going back to Pindar. This conventional encomiastic language for Paullus (in a Greek, Pindaric style) contrasts with the real, less stylized feelings for Ligurinus on display at the end of the poem. See Lasserre 1974 for the encomiastic tradition, Crotty 1982, 79 for its use in Pindar.

<sup>70</sup> Garrison 1991, 343; Garrison wonders if Horace is influenced here by Meleager, *A.P.* 12.125.1-2: "I constantly have a dream that hunts after the winged apparition" of the boy he loves.

<sup>71</sup> Armstrong 1989, 141 here rightly notes that the ambiguous syntax in the Latin makes these lines apply to both dreams and reality.

Ligurinus is athletic and a fit, manly Roman citizen<sup>72</sup> as opposed to an effeminate boy. Oliensis<sup>73</sup> notes that “the Ligurinus of Horace’s dreams is located in a Roman space, the Field of Mars, and is engaged in improving and approved Roman activities: he is toughening himself up, racing and swimming.”

Despite Oliensis’ observation that Ligurinus is in a Roman space doing Roman activities, it may be that Horace is consciously framing his relationship with Ligurinus in a Greek (*i.e.* ephebophilic) manner unfamiliar to Roman society. This connection is made via the use of athletics as a locus for erotic stimulation; indeed, Thomas Hubbard<sup>74</sup> writes that “Greek athletics was a pre-eminently erotic spectacle.” The use of the Campus Martius as a training ground recalls the ancient Greek *palaestra*, the wrestling school (often connected to a gymnasium). Offering an opportunity to watch muscular young men work out in virtually no clothing, the *palaestra* was a sexually charged environment, particularly for the trainer of the young wrestlers. As Hubbard<sup>75</sup> writes, “the *palaestra* was a sanctuary of pederastic culture and...it was not uncommon for the relationships between a trainer and young athlete to be intimate and eroticized.” Further, “the implied homoeroticism of athletic group scenes on numerous Athenian vases supports the notion that many forms of athletic exercise and competition were additionally contests of beauty and physical display.”<sup>76</sup> Aside from the obvious draw of sleeping with a muscular, physically attractive body, sex with athletes had other attractions for the Greeks. Thomas

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<sup>72</sup> Garrison 1991, 343: “His name identifies him as an Italian from Liguria.”

<sup>73</sup> Oliensis 2007, 230-231.

<sup>74</sup> Hubbard 2011, 211.

<sup>75</sup> Hubbard 2003a, 16.

<sup>76</sup> Hubbard 2011, 212.



Scanlon writes,<sup>77</sup> “Sexual desire of audiences, habitués of the gymnasium, or other athletes for an athlete may be a manifestation of high valuation of the beloved’s beauty, personal qualities, social status, or some complex combination of all of these.” The ephebophilic relationship Horace has with Ligurinus is connected to this erotic quality of Greek athletics.

Eroticized athletics, and thus ephebophilic relationships, are unfamiliar to Horace’s Roman audience. The Romans disapproved of the Greek athletic custom of training nude, which was shameful to Roman eyes. For example, in Cicero’s *De Re Publica* (4.4), one character comments on how the nudity of the young men training in the Greek gymnasium leads to inevitable free love among the males: *quam contrectationes et amores soluti et liberi!* A clear difference between the Greek *palaestra* and the Campus Martius is that the Campus was an outdoor area, and thus all activities there could be seen by others. But the wrestling at the Greek games took place in a public setting, and “the games themselves, and not just the gymnasia, furnished real opportunities for men to ‘pick up’ a young beloved.”<sup>78</sup> It is this athletic element of the Campus that allows Horace to make his relationship with Ligurinus seem so fundamentally Greek, as “the erotic attractions of the gymnasia are topical from the sixth century to the period of the Roman Empire.”<sup>79</sup> Horace’s interest in muscular manly bodies, here situated in an athletic space, is Greek in nature.

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<sup>77</sup> Scanlon 2002, 292.

<sup>78</sup> Scanlon 2002, 214.

<sup>79</sup> Scanlon 2002, 219.

By describing his relationship with Ligurinus with such a Greek flavor, the Ephebophile exposes its incompatibility with Roman sexual mores. Ligurinus, who uses the training facilities at the Campus Martius, must be a freeborn Roman rather than a slave-boy. As Craig Williams<sup>80</sup> writes, “The Greek tradition of pederasty, whereby citizen males might openly engage in romantic and sexual relationships with freeborn adolescent males who would one day be citizens, in Roman terms was *stuprum*; it was a disgraceful, illicit behavior.” Thus perhaps the true lament in this poem for the Ephebophile is that societal pressures prevent him from fulfilling his desire; only in his dreams can he embrace Ligurinus. While ostensibly Horace writes in this poem that he is too old for love, perhaps the true impediment to love is the general Roman hostility toward a homosexual relationship with a freeborn Roman. The impossibility of the fruition of the Ephebophile’s desire for a manly lover (and the subsequent sense of hopelessness) is then more implicit in *Odes* 1.8 and 3.7, when he can only admire the bodies of Sybaris and Enipeus from afar and at a level of remove; he is describing what attributes make the men seem so attractive to other women, though in doing so he suggests that he has been checking out the men as well.

The second of the two Ligurinus Odes, *Odes* 4.10, also features the Ephebophile Persona. In 4.1.37-40, Ligurinus was evading Horace’s pursuit, and in 4.1.34 he was inducing the occasional tear on Horace’s cheek. Now in 4.10 the Ephebophile strikes back at the conceited boy and warns him that he will not be a beautiful youth forever. In the very first line, Horace makes the situation clear, describing Ligurinus as still cruel to

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<sup>80</sup> Williams 1999, 62.

him (*crudelis adhuc*) from *Odes* 4.1 and yet still a romantic catch (*Veneris muneribus potens*). The Ephebophile then threatens that eventually he will undergo a physical transformation that will leave him far less desirable than he is now, and thus he should take heed to accept the advances of potential lovers while they are still coming to him. There is some ambiguity to the sentiment being described here, both because of a textual problem with *pluma* (2) for which many critics have offered substitutions (*bruma*, *multa*, *palma*, etc.) and because of the (perhaps intentional) vagueness of whether Ligurinus metamorphoses into an adolescent with his first beard or an old man with white hair.<sup>81</sup> Williams<sup>82</sup> notes, “Just as in the Greek textual tradition, the arrival of a full beard often appears in Roman texts as a distinct signifier: once a boy grows a full beard, he is no longer a boy but a man and thus no longer generally desirable to other men.”

Horace is likely drawing from earlier poetic works on this theme. In Tibullus 1.9, the speaker bemoans the fact that he has lost his boy lover Marathus and reminds him that his youthful beauty will not last forever. As Sonya Lida Taran<sup>83</sup> has written, there were a variety of erotic motifs about the short span granted to youth and the charms of a boy in the poetry of the Greek Anthology, some of which was written before Horace’s career (with which he could have been familiar); certainly Sappho 1, which Horace partially adapts in *Odes* 3.26, adopts a variation on this theme as well. It is likely that, in general, the sentiment the Ephebophile wishes to express in this poem is that Ligurinus will eventually be in Horace’s position as the ugly, rejected older man. Such a sentiment ties

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<sup>81</sup> Asztalos 2008.

<sup>82</sup> Williams 1999, 73.

<sup>83</sup> Taran 1985.

together several Horatian themes: what goes around comes around for cruel lovers; older lovers become uglier over time; eventually one becomes too old for love (a sentiment found in *Odes* 4.1).

The Horatian Ephebophile persona can be detected in several poems from the *Odes* of Horace. Unlike the Lothario or the Excluded Lover, the Horatian Ephebophile persona is distinct from the other sexual personae in his primary desire for a male as sexual partner; his attitude toward his romantic object is slightly but perceptibly different from the attitude of the Lothario or the Excluded Lover. In addition, the Ephebophile's focus with regard to erotic qualities in a sexual partner is atypical of most Roman pederasts, in that he often seeks an older, more masculine lover (as made clear by various distinctly Roman references in the poems). Horace's unique take on a familiar literary trope of the classical world demonstrates a vibrant artistic creativity and perhaps describes certain realities at Rome that are given little exposure in the corpus of Latin poetry.

## Chapter Four: The Moralist Persona

Another sexual persona occurring in the works of Horace, although it may be more accurate to call it an antisexual persona, is "Horace the Moralist." The defining feature of the Moralist is his criticism of the liberal sexual behavior of his time and his praise of the sexual mores of earlier generations of Romans, of the kind promoted by Augustus through his so-called moral legislation. The Moralist praises the chastity of unmarried young Roman girls and the monogamy of married Roman women; adultery is, for the Moralist, a very shameful act for a Roman. The Moralist stands in stark contrast to the Lothario, whose sexual escapades were the subject of amusement and humor. The Moralist takes such behavior seriously and considers it a problem plaguing Rome. Also, the tone that the Moralist takes concerning contemporary Roman sexuality is often one of bitterness, never one of mildness or indulgence.

Finally, the Moralist often appears in what R.O.A.M. Lyne<sup>84</sup> would call "public poetry," poetry whose subject matter is civic and national rather than the individual and particular matter usually found in Horace's odes; the Moralist is "performing the role of the public, moral poet."<sup>85</sup> Because of this, Augustus is frequently cited in these poems as a man who can bring about the reform of moral standards at Rome. It is important, however, not to see the Moralist simply as a "propagandistic" persona adopted by Horace in certain poems to win the favor of the Augustan administration (and his own patron, the Augustan adviser Maecenas). Rather, the Moralist taps into an element of the national

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<sup>84</sup> Lyne 1995, 2.

<sup>85</sup> Lyne 1995, 57.

conversation on civic morality and speaks on its behalf, even if such opinions may be at odds with the Lothario's attitude toward sex.

One question which may arise is whether the Moralist persona is an ironic persona. Some evidence can be found in the poems that suggests Horace is not taking the Moralist too seriously. The anecdote in *Odes* 3.6 about the young wife taking on all comers in a dark room and being sold by her husband to Spanish sailors resembles the exaggerated grumbling of Juvenal's satiric persona. The appeal in *Odes* 3.24 to the sexual morality of "savage" eastern nomadic tribes could also be an ironic claim, one Juvenal himself makes (as will be shown below). In addition, the dark ending of *Odes* 3.6, lamenting contemporary wickedness, is followed by *Odes* 3.7, a poem that "treats a woman's potential unchastity with urbane and cynical amusement."<sup>86</sup> Horace never married nor had children, so the Augustan moral legislation and Augustus' own *auctoritas* apparently never influenced him too much. But Horace's very real interaction with the Augustan government (the *Carmen Saeculare*, *Epistles* 2.1 to Augustus) suggests that he did have an interest in participating in the success of the new regime, and the use of multiple sexual personae in the *Odes* and *Epodes* allows Horace to express feelings, or write in voices, that are often contradictory. The primacy of the Lothario persona can make the Moralist's dire proclamations seem silly, but the Moralist himself is not inherently a joke.

In *Odes* 3.24, a long poem calling for moral leadership at Rome, Horace speaks from the Moralist persona. Horace attacks the contemporary Roman decadence, favoring

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<sup>86</sup> Lyne 1995, 178.

instead the mores of other societies. At lines 9-24 the Moralist describes the "noble simplicity of savage tribes,"<sup>87</sup> where wives are faithful and do not take secret lovers (*nec nitido fudit adultero*, 20). These wives, though lacking the opulent wealth of Roman matrons, surpass them with their *castitas* (23); this chastity keeps them away from paramours and leaves them *metuens alterius viri / certo foedere* (22-23). Sexual misdeeds are punished with death (24), a severe tone when contrasted with the slapstick scene of an adulterer fleeing his lover's husband in *Satires* 1.2.

The Moralist prefers the sexual customs of the Scythians and the *rigidi Getae* (11) to those of his Roman contemporaries. Fraenkel<sup>88</sup> writes that Horace is seizing on "an idea current in the popular philosophy of the time, glorification of the moral standards in primitive societies." While here he applies it to barbarian nations of the north, often he applies it to earlier Romans (such as in *Odes* 3.6) or Romans in environments far from city life (as in *Epode* 2).<sup>89</sup> The fact that he chooses these two tribes as examples of superior sexual morality is telling. Since, as Nisbet and Rudd<sup>90</sup> point out, "Ancient ethnographical writing often ignored distinctions of time and place, and by Horace's day the Scythians were often confused with the Getae and the Sarmatians," one can assume that Horace is using two names for essentially the same group of people. (The fact that in lines 9-12 he notes that both tribes are nomadic suggests that he does not make much of a distinction between the two tribes.) "As a people living at the margins of the familiar

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<sup>87</sup> Garrison 1991, 327.

<sup>88</sup> Fraenkel 1957, 241.

<sup>89</sup> Fraenkel 1957, 241.

<sup>90</sup> Nisbet and Rudd 2004, 272.

world, the Scythians were sometimes idealized," Nisbet and Rudd note, and "the Romans were particularly ready to praise the hardihood of northern barbarians (cf. Tacitus' *Germania*)."<sup>91</sup> Indeed, Lucian, writing in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, composes a dialogue called *Toxaris* wherein a Scythian man argues that Scythians are more faithful to their friends than Greeks are.<sup>92</sup> Thus the Scythians fill a particular rhetorical need for Horace in this poem.

But Herodotus noted the savagery of their behavior while writing several centuries prior, citing examples of sexual immodesty among the Scythian tribes, especially those who share all their wives in common.<sup>93</sup> And Strabo, roughly contemporary with Horace though a Greek, says<sup>94</sup> that the Getae men take ten or eleven women as brides, and that a man who dies with only four or five brides is pitied; he also says<sup>95</sup> that the Scythians shared their women and children, both statements showing behavior counter to the monogamy promoted by the Moralists. Horace's choice of model societies in this poem must speak to a larger discourse.

Dio Cassius (62.6.4) writes that Queen Boudicca of Britain told her native tribes that the Romans were sexually immodest, *μαλθακῶς κοιμωμένους, μετὰ μειρακίων, καὶ τούτων ἐξώρων, καθεύδοντας*, "effeminately bedding sleepers from among the striplings, even from among those underage." Dio Cassius is writing here from the early 3rd century AD about an event from 61 AD, so it is hard to say whether this speech reflects the native

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<sup>91</sup> Nisbet and Rudd 2004, 271.

<sup>92</sup> Esp. *Toxaris* 9.

<sup>93</sup> 1.216, 4.104.

<sup>94</sup> 7.3.4, citing Menander.

<sup>95</sup> 7.3.9, citing Ephorus (F42 of Ephorus).



Britons' thoughts about Neronian sexual mores at Rome or the thoughts of Romans (or Roman citizens from Greece) from the early 3rd century. In either case, the Romans appear to be more sexually immoral than the more barbaric nations they meet in battle by the middle of the 1st century AD. Later, at the beginning of the 2nd century AD, Juvenal in *Satires* 2 quips that *quae nunc populi fiunt uictoris in urbe / non faciunt illi quos uicimus* (162-3), referring to sexual behavior. The Romans, and not the nations they conquer, are the source of decadent behavior. The following lines (163-170) make it clear that foreign nations, even those of the East formerly associated with deviant sexuality, now are said to learn such behavior from the Romans: *sic praetextatos referunt Artaxata mores* (170).

But before Horace, in Republican Rome, sexual impropriety was connected to foreign nations (especially the Greeks) and was brought by them through centuries of interaction once Rome became the dominant force in the Mediterranean. For example, in the *Tusculan Disputations* (4.70) Cicero writes about pederastic practices: *Mihi quidem haec in Graecorum gymnasiis nata consuetudo videtur, in quibus isti liberi et concessi sunt amores. Bene ergo Ennius: 'Flagiti principium est nudare inter civis corpora.'* Here the culprit is the Greek gymnasium, which was a natural site for sexual activity to occur,<sup>96</sup> since (contrary to Roman mores, as Cicero praises Ennius for noting in the previous passage) the athletes were nude. Somewhere between the Republic and the Empire the rhetoric of ethnosexuality flipped; where before the Romans only learned immorality from foreigners, afterwards the foreigners learned it from the Romans. The

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<sup>96</sup> See pg. 44.

transition would seem to be in the Augustan Period, and Horace picks up this discourse in the present ode. One speculation is that the connection between civic morality and military dominance, explicit in *Odes* 3.6, forced Romans to have a negative conception of themselves after the horrors of the civil wars in the 40s and 30s BC. A gradual laxity toward public religious rites and liberality of sexual mores suddenly became apparent in the national discourse following Actium, with domestic peace finally achieved at Rome. A traumatic national crisis caused the Romans to re-evaluate their civic character and find it inferior to earlier assumptions.

The Moralist of *Odes* 3.24 seeks a great man, a *Pater Urbium* (27), who can change Roman cultural mores for the better. The man who will rescue Rome from moral decay is "veiled in generalizing terms"<sup>97</sup> at line 25 (*O quisquis*), but the contemporary Roman reader would naturally be led to think of Augustus (the *Pater Patriae*). This man must "dare to rein in untamed license" (*indomitam audeat / refrenare licentiam*, 28-29). The means by which the unnamed *Pater Urbium* must rein in sexual degeneracy is twofold: legislative penalties and cultural change. The Moralist asks, *quid tristes querimoniae / si non supplicio culpa reciditur?* (33-34), calling for *culpa* to be administered (presumably by the state). But he then asks, *quid leges sine moribus / vanae proficiunt?* (35-36), admitting that public morality cannot simply be legislated into the hearts and minds of the Roman people. The *Pater Urbium* must have the *auctoritas* both to introduce new legislation and to change sexual behavior organically at Rome, so that ultimately the Romans can better resemble the sexuality of the "noble savages" like the

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<sup>97</sup> Fraenkel 1957, 242.

Scythians and Getae. Lyne<sup>98</sup> found the Moralist's statements on "public sexual morality" to be lacking enough "indirectness" to avoid "unmediated moralizing," and it is clear that this poem has an agenda in mind, but actually the Moralist here is open about the necessity of the Romans' attitudes changing independently of governmental coercion. *Odes* 3.24 is not an encomium to totalitarian rule of society's sexual ethics; it speaks with desire to return to an almost mythical era of conservative sexual behavior, which naturally can be brought about by the help of Augustus, but only in part by him.

The Moralist persona also appears in *Odes* 3.6, an attack on contemporary Roman behavior. The first six odes from Book III are often referred to as the "Roman Odes," as they are all written in Alcaic stanzas (Horace's preferred choice for public poetry<sup>99</sup>) and all speak to larger civic virtues, but beyond the observation that these poems have a certain "public" character to them, the designation of "Roman Odes" does not illuminate the poems much further; the connection between Horace and Augustus, with regard to these odes, is not at all clear and is subject to much scholarly debate. Nonetheless, *Odes* 3.6 features a grim observation about the problems in Rome at the end of the Republic, as moral decline and civil unrest have led to military defeats. The implicit solution to Rome's problems is an adoption of a more conservative civic morality, of the kind which Augustus was promoting at this time (*Odes* 3.6 was published in 23 B.C.) with legislation such as the *Lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis*. The Moralist flatly states in lines 19-20

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<sup>98</sup> Lyne 1995, 57.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. *Odes* 1.27, 1.37, 2.15, 3.1-6, 3.29, 4.4, 4.15.

that moral turpitude is the source (*hoc fonte*) of all the military and domestic disasters (*clades*) at Rome.

Starting in the sixth stanza, the Moralist details the types of sexual misbehavior found at Rome that bear the blame for such disasters. The typical Roman maiden “rejoices to be taught Ionic movements” (*motus doceri gaudet Ionicos*, 21), the voluptuous dances of the exotic East. Despite being young, she is groomed for *artes* (*artes amatoriae*, presumably) and has *incestos amores* in mind. Charles Witke<sup>100</sup> reads these lines as “even now, in her unmarried state, she dwells wholeheartedly on extra-marital lovers.” The Moralist’s tone here is bitter: *gaudet* (21), *iam nunc* (23), *de tenero ungui* (24). In the next two stanzas, Horace decries how the typical new Roman wife seeks younger lovers for adulterous escapades, takes on random men at her husband’s parties, and openly prostitutes herself to sailors, with her husband aware of it all; Witke<sup>101</sup> notes that for the husband, this is a “trade-off possibly for some unspeakable activity of his own.” The wife’s nymphomaniacal behavior is underscored by the fact that she does not even choose (*neque eligit*) her sexual partners and in fact “does not view her partners as men individualized in some way; she invokes no personal likes but rather is completely indiscriminate as well as completely loose: a moral defect of considerable proportions even by elegy’s standards.”<sup>102</sup>

The Moralist paints for the reader of *Odes* 3.6 a bleak picture of sexual decadence at Rome, an image “of a situation deeply corrupt and totally outside the structure and

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<sup>100</sup> Witke 1983, 69-70.

<sup>101</sup> Witke 1983, 70.

<sup>102</sup> Witke 1983, 70.

conventions of erotic elegy as a literary form."<sup>103</sup> The implied solution to the problems is the moral reform promoted by Augustus and his administration. The first wave of Augustan moral legislation appeared around 29 or 28 BC and regulated marriage among the upper class; Horace is looking ahead to the second wave of legislation (probably being worked on and drafted already by 23 BC, when the present ode was published), which had been passed by 17 BC and more closely regulated the sexual behavior of the Romans.<sup>104</sup> Some of the improprieties mentioned by the Moralist correspond with specific laws later passed by Augustus (in particular, the married men who knowingly allow their wives to carry on adulterous affairs and the *Lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* of the second wave of legislation, a law which prosecuted men who did not divorce unfaithful wives). The Horace of this ode comes down harshly on adultery and the sexuality of young women, whereas in other poems (such as those of the Lothario) he is far more cavalier and jokey about sleeping with freeborn Roman women, married or otherwise.

The Moralist persona can also be found in *Odes* 4.5, a poem in praise of Augustus, who has traveled away from Rome. In the sixth stanza, Horace describes how civic morality changes for the better when Augustus is present at Rome. When Augustus' face "has shined upon the people, the day goes more pleasantly and the sun shines better" (*adfulsit populo gratior it dies / et soles melius nitent*, 7-8), and Rome seeks Augustus (*quaerit patria Caesarem*, 16) because his presence has induced positive effects. Each

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<sup>103</sup> Witke 1983, 70.

<sup>104</sup> Galinsky 1981, 127ff.

Roman *domus* (21) is *casta*, referring to sexual modesty, and polluted by no *stupris* (a word that connotes specifically sexual misdeeds). Roman mothers (*puerperae* in line 23, literally “child-bearers,” a word that highlights solely the procreative aspect of femininity) are lauded for having children that look like the women’s husbands. Thus in line 21 the Moralist praises families whose behavior is consistent with general civic expectations about sexual activity and morality, and in line 23 he specifically praises women who do not commit adultery by sleeping with men other than their husbands. Unmarried freeborn Roman girls and married Roman women, two objects of the Lothario’s erotic desire, are cited here as off-limits by the Moralist. While it is true that the Lothario of *Satires* 1.2 also instructs the reader not to pursue Roman matrons, but freedwomen instead, his reasoning is not based on some sort of civic morality, but rather a desire not to get in trouble (and thus put himself in a situation that could give him pain). In *Odes* 4.5, however, the Moralist sees such adultery as *nefas* (22) and contrary to Roman cultural mores. In fact, the Moralist supports the kind of violent retribution that the Lothario fears in *Satires* 1.2; he is happy that, when Augustus is in Rome, *culpam poena premit comes* (24).

The Moralist’s praise of conservative Roman sexual morality is here inseparably linked to praise of Augustus and his influence on the Roman state at this time. As Fraenkel<sup>105</sup> writes, “Turning to the moral improvements which the new regime has brought about, the renewal of the purity of married life (21) and, closely connected with it, the encouragement given to the propagation of legitimate offspring (23) are singled out

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<sup>105</sup> Fraenkel 1957, 444.

for special praise." Although the particulars of the Augustan moral legislation are subject to some scholarly dispute, clearly in this poem Horace refers to laws passed by Augustus (or through his political clout) attempting to regulate the sexual activity of elite Roman families. *Odes* 4.5 was published in 13 BC, several years after the second wave of moral legislation, and thus at an appropriate time for the Moralist to praise Augustus for the positive effects visible at Rome as a result of the new laws Augustus has enacted. Indeed, in line 22 the Moralist says that "custom and law have overcome sinful vice" (*mos et lex maculosum edomuit nefas*). *Mos et lex* is a phrase chosen particularly because of its association with the Augustan moral legislation, as can be found elsewhere. In *Odes* 3.24, published ten years earlier than *Odes* 4.5, the Moralist condemns a Roman populace for whom the marriage laws of 29 or 28 BC have had little effect (and who are due for more laws) and says, *quid leges sine moribus vanae proficiunt?* (25). Decades later, Augustus writes in the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*<sup>106</sup> that "with new laws authored by me, I restored many practices of our elders already fading away in our age" (*legibus novi[s] m[e] auctore l]atis m[ulta e]xempla maiorum exolescentia iam ex nostro [saecul]o red[uxi]*), with *exemplum* being synonymous here with *mos*. The Moralist supports traditional sexual modesty (*mos*) as achieved through civic means (*lex*), and he writes in a civic role as a proponent of the Augustan policies that achieved this modesty. As opposed to that "Horace" who kids about sleeping with other men's wives, the Moralist is serious about marital purity and chastity.

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<sup>106</sup> 8.5; text from Cooley 2009.

A glimpse of the Moralist persona appears in *Odes* 4.15, a paean to Augustus that closes the fourth and final book of odes. In a list of the accomplishments of the Augustan reign at Rome, Horace writes that he *ordinem / rectum evaganti frena licentiae iniecit emovitque culpas / et veteres revocavit artes* (9-12). The image of Augustus "putting a rein on sexual license" recalls the earlier request, in *Odes* 3.24, for someone to appear at Rome who "dares to rein in untamed license" (*indomitam audeat / refrenare licentiam*, 28-29). Thus Augustus, in the realm of civic modesty, has lived up to the hope and expectation of Horace during the ten years between the publication of Books III and IV by passing laws regulating Roman sexual behavior; the sexual improprieties so criticized by the Moralist are now being restrained. Horace invokes a military image with the phrase *ordinem / rectum evaganti*, which relates to soldiers "breaking ranks in the order of battle."<sup>107</sup> This metaphor may be chosen by the Moralist specifically to highlight the causal connection between civic morality and national military dominance as was argued in *Odes* 3.6. By ending the stanza with *veteres revocavit artes*, the Moralist specifically places sexual chastity among the other civic virtues (*artes*) which made Rome great (13-16). Through the practical effects of the Augustan moral legislation, and the *auctoritas* of the *princeps* himself, the sexual mores long desired by the Moralist have begun to return to Rome.

Finally, the Moralist can be found in *Odes* 3.15, although in this poem Horace does not make a public address for the Augustan Age and retains some traces of Lothario sensibility. The Moralist speaks in this poem to an older woman, as the first word *uxor* so

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<sup>107</sup> Garrison 1991, 368.



emphatically tells the reader. He instructs this woman, Chloris, to put an end to her sexual misdeeds (*nequitiae*, 2) and what Nisbet & Rudd<sup>108</sup> translate as “scandalous exertions” (*famosis laboribus*, 3). Evidently her husband, the poor man (*pauperis*, 1) Ibycus, either does not know about these exploits or does not care. Regardless, the Moralist finds something shameful in them and feels the need to let Chloris know about it. Chloris “shows an unseemly addiction to sex,”<sup>109</sup> which manifests itself by acting like her daughter Pholoe; Chloris *inter ludere virgines* (5), and here *ludere* is a “sexual euphemism.”<sup>110</sup> Chloris seeks to attract the attention of another man, Nothus, by *lascivae similem ludere capreae* (12). To the Moralist, Chloris needs to start acting like a respectable Roman<sup>111</sup> matron: she must stick to her woolwork (13-14) and her husband.

What she has apparently been busy with instead, at lines 14-16, include playing the cithara and drinking heavily, both to the consternation of the Moralist. It is not right for Chloris to play the cithara, *non citharae decent* (14), because “to provide music at a symposium was not the business of an elderly woman;”<sup>112</sup> such activity is associated with the *hetaira* and thus would be shameful for a respectable Roman matron. Her heavy drinking is also chided by Horace, a trait which, going back to Attic Old Comedy, “was another proverbial stereotype of older women, and...an inevitable item in their caricature.”<sup>113</sup> Drinking wine is an “illicit wifely enjoyment” again too associated with

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<sup>108</sup> Nisbet and Rudd 2004, 193.

<sup>109</sup> Nisbet and Rudd 2004, 192.

<sup>110</sup> Nisbet and Rudd 2004, 196.

<sup>111</sup> The names in this poem are all Greek, but the moral imperative is Roman.

<sup>112</sup> Nisbet and Rudd 2004, 197.

<sup>113</sup> Henderson 1987, 119.

the male symposium, which was “off-limits for respectable women.”<sup>114</sup> Thus even these two behaviors, though ostensibly separate from Chloris’ other sexual faults, draw unfavorable connections with sexual impropriety for the Moralist.

What is uncharacteristic of the Moralist in this poem is that he has no problem with this behavior if it is performed by the daughter, Pholoe. The sexual behavior of Chloris is criticized by Horace (in terms of what is *deceat*, 8), but it is all *rectius* for the *filia* (8). Pholoe is perfectly allowed to *expugnat iuvenum domos* (9), despite its seemingly aggressive sexual nature, and the cithara, roses, and dregs of wine are acceptable associations for her. Horace sees nothing wrong with Pholoe’s sexual escapades, since she is young and unmarried. Chloris’ *nequitiae* and *famosis laboribus* are clearly moral failings, but they stem from her age and marital status; Pholoe is free to sleep around. Thus the Moralist appears to be somewhat more lax than normal toward unmarried girls’ sexual behavior in this poem. Nonetheless, the tone that the Moralist takes toward sexual immodesty in this ode is serious. “There is none of the overt obscenity associated with *iambi*, and no display of the personal bitterness found in epigram and elegy; the censure is conveyed with some degree of moderation (e.g. *laboribus* in v. 3, *ludere* in v. 12), and the criticism is ostensibly based on decorum (*deceat* in v. 8, *decent* in v. 14).”<sup>115</sup> While the scope of the Moralist’s complaint has shrunk in *Odes* 3.15 from extensive national decadence to minor individual immodesty, the persona’s message is the same.

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<sup>114</sup> Henderson 1987, 120.

<sup>115</sup> Nisbet and Rudd 2004, 192.

The Moralist is another sexual persona of Horace that can be traced in his *Odes* and *Epodes*. His tone is serious and grave, with no touches of levity or indulgence toward his subject material. Marked by his attacks on the sexual immodesty of the Romans in his time, he praises the sexual ethics of earlier generations and, as a public poet, promotes the role of Augustus as champion of reactionary sexuality through his moral legislation. The youthful licentiousness and rampant adultery at Rome are serious problems that need to be addressed, problems which put the very safety of the Roman state in jeopardy. It is reasonable to say that the Moralist persona is a reaction to the Lothario persona, and his poems gain an additional level of meaning when juxtaposed with those of the Lothario, whose sexual escapades were the subject of amusement and humor. As opposed to the private love affairs of the Lothario, the Moralist deals with weightier civic matters with a larger public audience in mind; the flippant irony of the past must now be cast off as Horace engages the national conversation on sexuality.

## Chapter Five: Exceptions

While the notion of sexual personae in Horace provides a framework for better understanding the *Odes* and *Epodes*, there are certain poems that do not easily fit this framework or that feature ambiguities of sexual identity. Far from being inconvenient or confusing, these poems have a rich multilayered erotic narrative and, unsurprisingly, are some of the more celebrated poems in the Horatian corpus. It is valuable to analyze these poems to see how Horace toys with, or complicates, the very sexual personae that he otherwise uses as foundations for his poetry.

Perhaps the most well-known of these exceptions is *Odes* 1.5, the Pyrrha Ode. There are three characters in this poem: Pyrrha, named at line 3, likely a courtesan;<sup>116</sup> an unnamed *gracilis puer* (1) who has fallen in love with her; and “Horace” himself, who reveals in the last stanza that he too once was in love with Pyrrha. Currently, the relationship between Pyrrha and the *puer* is faring well: they embrace in the cover of rosy grottoes (1-3), she tastefully binds up her hair for him (4), he applies a (perhaps too) large amount of perfumes to his hair and body for her (2). Right now, the boy enjoys Pyrrha and thinks she is “golden” (*aurea*, 9), matching her golden hair (*flavam comam*, 4) and shining countenance (*nites*, 13). But unlike the boy, Horace knows what will happen next: storm clouds (gold turns to black, *nigris ventis*, 7) will move into their relationship and the waters of love will grow choppy. “The storm of love was a well-worn conceit,”

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<sup>116</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 74: the name is “probably favored by hetaerae, and is the title of a play by Diphilus.”

writes Steele Commager,<sup>117</sup> and “the comparison between a woman and the sea had been current at least as early as Semonides[7.37-41, Diehl].” Thus, such imagery creates an obvious “literary character”<sup>118</sup> to the poem, which is continued as Horace continues the maritime metaphor. In the final stanza, Horace makes a votive offering of thanks for surviving the shipwreck and hangs his wet clothes in a temple, adopting a Hellenistic trope.<sup>119</sup>

Presumably, Horace’s description of the relationship between Pyrrha and the unnamed *puer* (whose namelessness suggests an almost timeless quality, or the idea that he could be anybody, not just a particular young man) matches Horace’s own previous relationship with Pyrrha, revealing that he too once splashed on perfumes and embraced her in a grotto. Likewise, the description of how the relationship suddenly goes sour once Pyrrha finds someone else (the *aurae fallacis* of which the boy is ignorant) suggests that this is how Horace’s own “shipwreck” went. (Logically, if you make predictions based on experience, your predictions must reveal what had happened to you in the past.) When Horace says “Wretched are they to whom you shine untried” (*miseri quibus intemptata nites*, 12-13), he is also admitting, “You, Pyrrha, once shone to me.”

We can see in this poem an overlap of both the Lothario and Excluded Lover personae. Horace takes up the didactic role here and claims to know exactly what will happen next to the *puer* and Pyrrha in their relationship, but he speaks not as a master of *Veneris praecepta* who uses his success with women as proof of his knowledge, but

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<sup>117</sup> Commager 1967, 66.

<sup>118</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 73.

<sup>119</sup> cf. Diodorus, *P.A.* 6.245.

rather as one who has possessed and lost Pyrrha in the past and can speak from experience; the proof of his authority is the *tabula votiva* which shows (*indicat*, 14) that he hung up his *uvida vestimenta* in the temple. Failure, not success, gives him his authority. Yet unlike the typical tone of the poems of the Excluded Lover, this ode “is not sentimental, heart-felt, or particularly pretty,” but displays “wit, urbanity, and astringent charm.”<sup>120</sup> Horace does not feel sadness or dejection for having lost Pyrrha in the past, but merely gratitude that he has survived the ordeal. He gives no indication that he wants to “get back in the game,” but is content to find amusement (perhaps of the cruel variety) in the trials and tribulations of each new boy whom Pyrrha finds. Ultimately, Horace’s experience with Pyrrha confirms the typical Horatian attitude toward monogamy: namely, that it is to be avoided. The credulous (*credulus*, 9) man who believes that his lover will be *semper vacuam*, *semper amabilem* (10) is doomed to inevitable heartbreak. The older, wiser Horace is cultured and experienced enough to know better.

A similar overlap between Lothario and Excluded Lover can be found in *Odes* 1.16, in which Horace recants earlier “reproachful iambics” (*criminosus...iambis*, 2-3) he has written.<sup>121</sup> The poem begins with Horace apologizing to a young girl whom he flatters with his address, saying *O matre pulchra filia pulchrior* (1). He offers to let her destroy the offensive lines any way she wishes, be it by fire or by dumping into the Adriatic Sea. What follows in lines 5-21 is an extended meditation on anger, which ends

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<sup>120</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 73.

<sup>121</sup> This poem bears some similarities to Catullus 42, in which Catullus prepares and delivers abusive *hendecasyllabi* to attack a girl who has borrowed his writing tablets and refuses to return them. Catullus focuses on the period before and during the insulting poetry, whereas Horace focuses on the period after the girl has read and been offended by the poetry (when the poet expresses remorse).

in line 22 with Horace's exhortation to the girl, *Compesce mentem*. Clearly, Horace is talking about anger in these lines because the girl has become mad at him for his dirty poetry and he wishes to make amends. This is confirmed by *me quoque* in the same line, which shows that he was writing about her anger before and only now about the *fervor* (24) which induced him, *furentem* (25), to write cruel iambic poetry. In the last stanza, Horace's strategy is finally revealed: he admits that he wishes to change his poetry, *provided that* (*dum*, 26) the girl become Horace's sweetheart (*fias amica*, 27) and return her attitude toward him (*animum reddas*, 28) back to its presumable earlier state of affection. Since the retraction of the earlier cruel iambics is contingent on the maiden's restoration of romantic feelings, it is safe to say that Horace, cheeky as always, does not genuinely feel remorse for his previous mean poems; rather, he is saying or doing whatever it takes to woo the unnamed girl back.

Thus, again we have a situation in which elements of both the Lothario persona and the Excluded Lover are present in the ode. The tone here is the light, humorous, slightly self-effacing stance found so often in the Lothario's poems. Nisbet and Hubbard<sup>122</sup> write that the middle section of the poem is a "hyperbolic and mock-heroic development" with "an elegant pomposity" which "amusingly parodies a whole genre of writing." Likewise, Horace's offer at the beginning of the poem to commit all of his iambics to the flame or the deep, as well as his flattery of his addressee, is tongue-in-cheek. Most of all, the revelation at line 22 that the meditation on anger is directed not at the wrath of young Horace (who wrote the poems), but at the indignation of the girl (who

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<sup>122</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 202-204.

read and was offended by them) operates like a comedic punchline, playfully puncturing the built-up expectation of the reader. Yet the underlying action of this ode is that Horace has angered a girl who once loved him but now does not, and he seeks to regain her affection, as is typical of the Excluded Lover. Horace has loved and lost, and there is no suggestion in the poem either that Horace can move on to another girl or that he has such natural wooing ability that it will be easy to obtain her again. The “Horace” of this ode exists in a gray area between the Lothario and the Excluded Lover.

*Odes* 2.9 gives another example of a poem in which there is an erotic ambiguity. In this poem, Horace is consoling a friend of his (*amice*, 5) named Valgius who is saddened by the loss of his lover Mystes (either deceased or merely in a rival’s arms). Valgius has been writing *flebilibus modis* (9) about the loss of Mystes, for which, as in *Odes* 1.33 with Albius Tibullus, Horace has little patience. Some fragments of the poetry of Valgius, *i.e.* C. Valgius Rufus, survive; while there is no mention of a Mystes, Valgius does appear (in those fragments long enough to tell) to have written in elegiacs, and he “spoke admiringly of the neoteric Cinna,”<sup>123</sup> an erotic elegist, in fragment 2.<sup>124</sup> In mock consolation, Horace tells Valgius to quit singing *mollium querellarum* (17-18), words associated specifically with love elegy, and instead focus his poetic energies on the military exploits of Caesar Augustus (much as Horace himself often did). Horace is

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<sup>123</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1978, 135.

<sup>124</sup> Courtney 1993, 288. Courtney perceives Cinna’s influence in fragments 3 and 4 as well.



“parodying Valgius’ sentimentality,” noting that “unlike bad weather Valgius’ laments for Mystes are never-ending.”<sup>125</sup>

A variety of erotic strands can be detected in this poem. First, the similarities between *Odes* 2.9 and *Odes* 1.33 are readily apparent; Horace mocks the weepy elegies of Albius Tibullus as he does here with those of Valgius Rufus. The mildly didactic strain of this poem and the antipathy toward obsessing over a single love-object suggest the Lothario persona at work. However, unlike in 1.33, Horace’s message for the addressee is not a lesson in the *Veneris praecepta*, but rather a command to celebrate the foreign military success of Augustus. Horace “professes an unconvincing enthusiasm for more invigorating themes,”<sup>126</sup> with the implication that here, perhaps ironically, he finds Valgius’ love poetry inappropriate for the Augustan Age. In his persona of the Moralist, Horace found Rome to be full of decadent sexuality and praised Augustus for cleaning up the city and restoring civic monogamy. Here in *Odes* 2.9, Horace deflects Valgius’ desire to sing of love and instead instructs him to sing of Augustus, whom he praises for success abroad. Moreover, it seems that as Valgius is writing poetry about someone with the male name Mystes, he must be writing primarily pederastic, or rather ephebophilic, elegy; the comparisons between Mystes and *amabilem...Antilochum* (13-14) and *impubem...Troilon* (15-16), both handsome young warriors, confirm this. Thus traces of Lothario, Ephebophile, and Moralist personae all appear in this ode.

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<sup>125</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1978, 136.

<sup>126</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1978, 138.

In addition to these, the relationship between Horace and Valgius merits further consideration. Horace calls Valgius his friend (*amice*, 5), and as Nisbet and Hubbard<sup>127</sup> note: “C. Valgius Rufus had been a close friend of Horace’s for a good many years. Already in the *Satires* he appears in the inner circle of critics who are distinguished from more remote grandees like Pollio and Messalla (1.10.81 ff.).” Horace suggests that he and Valgius sing together (*cantemus*, 19) about Augustus, but as in *Odes* 3.28 (*cantabimus*, 9), an invitation to sing with Horace can have an erotic connotation. There seems to be some displacement at work in this poem: don’t sing about your lover, Horace says, sing with me; forget him, think about me.

This consideration leads to a broader analysis of male relationships posited by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in her 1985 book *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. Sedgwick theorized that male homosexuality and male friendship, or homosociality, did not exist as separate discrete possibilities, but occurred on an unbroken continuum, which for her was “a strategy for making generalizations about...the *structure*<sup>128</sup> of men’s relations with other men.”<sup>129</sup> Thus the ways in which men communicate with each other about desire, and about their feelings for one another, can often take on a partial erotic strain. Frequently, this phenomenon appears “within the structural context of triangular, heterosexual desire,”<sup>130</sup> such as when one man talks about the relationship another man has with his (female) lover, or when two men compete for

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<sup>127</sup> Nisbet and Hubbard 1978, 134.

<sup>128</sup> Emphasis her own.

<sup>129</sup> Sedgwick 1985, 2.

<sup>130</sup> Sedgwick 1985, 16.

one woman. Indeed, her hypothesis of male homosociality implies that “in any erotic rivalry, the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved: that the bonds of ‘rivalry’ and ‘love,’ differently as they are experienced, are equally powerful and in many senses equivalent.”<sup>131</sup> This unbroken spectrum between male friendship and male eroticism is also one of the sexual ambiguities that can be found in some of the poems of Horace.

Wing Chi Lee’s 2011 master’s report, “Desire Between Male Friends In Latin Poems: In Search of a Sub-genre of Homosocial Erotic Poetry,” explores the possibility of classifying certain poems of Catullus, Propertius, and Horace as “homosocial erotic poetry,” assimilating literary tropes found in them to the structure of male homosocial interaction. For example, Lee notes the “quasi-homoerotic mode”<sup>132</sup> of discourse between Horace and Maecenas in *Odes* 2.17. The poem begins by referencing Maecenas’ complaints toward Horace; the word used, *querellis* (1), is as I have shown before,<sup>133</sup> a word associated primarily with erotic elegy. Horace calls Maecenas not only a friend (*amicum*, 2), but also a “comrade” (*comites*, 12), the “grand glory and keystone of my affairs” (*mearum / grande decus columenque rerum*, 3-4), and “part of my soul” (*meae...partem animae*, 5), without whom Horace cannot feel “whole” (*integer*, 8). Lee<sup>134</sup> notes that these opening lines “elevate the clientary discourse to a level that resembles a lovers’ exchange,” and moreover that “the idea of *integer* versus *pars*

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<sup>131</sup> Sedgwick 1985, 21.

<sup>132</sup> Lee 2011, 16.

<sup>133</sup> See pg. 68.

<sup>134</sup> Lee 2011, 18.

reinforces the intimacy of their homosocial bond and highlights their co-existence as a single unit.” While it would be silly to argue that Horace is hinting at an erotic attraction to Maecenas in this poem, clearly their relationship has transcended simple friendship, and Horace wishes to describe this deep feeling of comradeship in a literary way. This indistinctness between homoeroticism and homosociality demonstrates the usefulness of Sedgwick’s theoretical unbroken spectrum of male desire.

Similar behavior can be found in other odes. In *Odes* 1.3, Horace writes a *propemptikon* for his friend, the poet Vergil. The *propemptikon* can have an erotic association for Horace,<sup>135</sup> who also writes one for his lover in *Odes* 3.27. In addition, Horace describes Vergil as “half of my soul”<sup>136</sup> (*animae dimidium meae*, 8), which as before with Maecenas suggests a degree of intimacy that goes beyond mere friendship. In *Odes* 3.8, Horace is celebrating the *Martiis Kalendis* (1), a festival day for married women,<sup>137</sup> yet he quickly identifies himself as a bachelor (*caelebs*, 1); Horace is instead celebrating the anniversary of his narrow escape from a falling tree. Only Maecenas will receive an invitation to his personal celebration, and the party will involve heavy drinking (*cyathos...centum*, 13-14) and staying up all night (*vigiles lucernas / perfer in lucem*, 14-15). Further, Horace asks Maecenas not to think of himself that night as a government figure but only as a private citizen (*privatus*, 26), free to do whatever he wants. And even

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<sup>135</sup> Horace has an earlier model in Theocritus 7, within which the character Lycidas sings a *propemptikon* for his beloved Ageanax. Cairns 1972 notes that “love/friendship between speaker and traveller” (120) or “a relationship of affection between the two” (6) are standard characteristics of the *propemptikon*.

<sup>136</sup> Callimachus uses a similar phrase, ἥμισυ μὲν ψυχῆς, in his epigram 41 (Pfeiffer), in which he writes about being erotically captivated by a young boy.

<sup>137</sup> Garrison 1991, 308. In *Satires* 9.50-53, Juvenal mentions this festival (the Matronalia) as a time when a Roman homosexual man might receive gifts as well from his lovers.

in *Odes* 4.11, wherein I have identified the voice of the Lothario persona, Ellen Oliensis<sup>138</sup> notes a possible homosocial subtext: “The slight dislocation involved in inviting Phyllis to a party honoring Maecenas (why isn’t the poem addressed to Maecenas, as several earlier Horatian invitations are?) invites us to ponder the relation of the ‘last’ of Horace’s ‘loves’ and the patron he elsewhere addresses as his poetic alpha and omega (*Prima dicte mihi, summa dicende Camena, Epistles* 1.1.1).” Similarly, the “mixing” of boys and girls (10), to Oliensis, “emblematically suggests” the “confounding” of gender roles. Horace’s behavior toward his male friends often veers into a gray area between friendship and homoeroticism, exemplifying the unbroken spectrum of homosociality.

In *Odes* 2.12, the reader can see the triangulation of heterosexual male desire that Sedgwick notes is a phenomenon of the unbroken homosocial spectrum. In this *recusatio* poem, Horace shuns martial themes in preference for love, and discusses why a woman named Licymnia is such an excellent topic for erotic poetry. Through a clever analysis, best articulated by Gordon Williams,<sup>139</sup> Licymnia can be interpreted to be a code name for Terentia, the wife of Maecenas. If this is the case, the poem fits into the male homosocial structure whereby men communicate their feelings for each other through their interaction with a third person, a woman. Horace goes into intimate detail about Licymnia’s charms and good qualities, describing her dancing (17), her beautiful eyes (15) and arms (18-19). Horace continues his argument that love themes in poetry are

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<sup>138</sup> Oliensis 2007, 233.

<sup>139</sup> Williams 1962, 28-46.

superior to military themes by praising Licymnia's (*i.e.* Terentia's) erotic activity with Maecenas (25-28). Horace's intimate knowledge of Maecenas' romantic exploits with his wife and his willingness to write about it in poetry (presumably free from punishment) suggest a degree of closeness in their relationship beyond the normal level for two friends. This poem's interpersonal structure matches the triangulation Sedgwick sees in male homosocial literature: "The basic configuration...includes a stylized female who functions as a subject of action but not of thought; a stylized male who functions as pure object; and a less stylized male speaker who functions as a subject of thought but not of action."<sup>140</sup> While this poem celebrates a particular heterosexual example of love, Horace also implicitly commemorates his relationship with Maecenas, not a homosexual one but one with a homoerotic tinge.

Not all the erotic poetry of Horace's *Odes* and *Epodes* can be analyzed with the sexual personae listed in the previous chapters. Certain poems have an ambivalence between the Lothario persona and the Excluded Lover, so that they have the typical tone of one but the typical narrative setup of the other. It is also possible for a poem of Horace to feature a nexus of various sexual personae within the larger discourse on erotics. Finally, Sedgwick's hypothesis of male homosocial desire can be applied, as Lee has written, to various poems in the Horatian corpus, allowing the reader to perceive a relationship between Horace and Maecenas neither purely friendly nor purely homoerotic. The complications arising from the sexual subject Horace creates in these

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<sup>140</sup> Sedgwick 1985, 33.

poems develop sophisticated poetic themes and produce a richness and depth of feeling which explains their appeal today.

## Conclusion

The *Odes* and *Epodes* of Horace feature several distinct sexual personae as the speakers of the poems. Horace the Lothario is a witty, didactic, slightly detached expert on love and erotic behavior. Horace the Excluded Lover is a gloomy failure at love who wants someone he cannot have. Horace the Ephebophile seeks as the object of his erotic desire a young man generally older than traditional Roman pederasty would suggest, but this desire is coded and suppressed. Horace the Moralist, possibly in ironic relation to the other three, attacks loose sexual morals and praises Augustus for returning chastity and monogamy to Rome. Finally, the sexual personae of some of Horace's poems defy simple categorization and must be analyzed more closely in order to explain the nature of the speaker.

The purpose of this articulation of sexual personae in Horace's *Odes* and *Epodes* is to provide a methodology which allows the reader to make better sense of the speaker of the poems. It is in these poems that Horace presents in particular a stylized version of himself, and persona theory brings to the forefront this self-fashioning. An awareness of Horace's multiple sexual personae reminds the reader that Horace wrote literature, not private diaries, and that the poetic voice (that is, the polyvalence of voices) is a literary creation. Since Horace was a unique Roman poet, his poetry more than anyone else lends itself to this kind of analysis (although Ovid would seem to be a good candidate as well), but the observation and identification of sexual personae in other classical works may be a fertile area of further study.



While one hesitates to compare ancient Roman behavior with cutting-edge American technology, a possible useful analogy to the literary phenomenon witnessed here would involve the Internet. In the mid-1990's, queer theorists speculated that the relative anonymity afforded by Internet chat rooms and message boards (in which users create "avatars" for themselves) would allow people to create a multiplicity of online personae of wildly different characteristics: different genders, different sexual orientations, essentially any new role a person wanted to act out. However, with the rise of social media networks in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (the so-called "Web 2.0"), a more common way of engaging with others on the Internet is to create various versions of oneself on each social media platform: one's Facebook profile is a different "persona" than his or her Myspace page, Xanga blog, or eHarmony profile. Users retain their real-life names and virtually all autobiographical details, but emphasize or suppress other features of their personalities, creating online personae that are not necessarily mutually-exclusive but are distinct. Like Horace's mirrored bedroom, everywhere one turns he or she can present a slightly different self-image.

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